



February 2, 2024 Email Blast

## Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education



*Hearts*

Directors,

February is a month to celebrate love. I never thought football would become a story of romance but the Kansas City Chiefs victory over the Baltimore Ravens had a lot of storylines to follow. Going down the theme for football, we all know football is a beloved sport by many. The Kansas City Chiefs have stayed in the spotlight in winning the Super Bowl two out of the last four years led by Coach Andy Reid and Quarterback Patrick Mahomes. Quarterbacks need receivers and in the case of Mahomes, Travis Kelce is his pick. Football is a team sport. You must have great chemistry to bring the team together and operate on the level as the Chiefs. Also playing out for all the world to see appears to be a sweet story of two famous people coming together with their own love story. I even watched the entire game to see how Taylor Swift reacted to the Chiefs' win and advancement to the Super Bowl. We could also learn from Taylor Swift's enthusiasm to be there and to support each other. If nothing else, it has been an interesting season. We can all hope the love story is genuine. If you were watching closely, the bond of brotherly love was on display when older brother Jason Kelce, Center for the Philadelphia Eagles, became emotional when telling his younger brother to "finish this" after the team won the game. Much like a football team, educators must work together to provide a quality educational experience for all students. General education and special education need to be as coordinated and seamless as Mahomes and Kelce.

After all, we are on the same team and want the best outcome (or win) for every student. Make sure you bring your best game, cheer for each other, and go for the Super Bowl!

The next **Director's Webinar** is February 6, 2024 at 1:00 pm. We have a packed session with important information to share. Additional information on GAA 2.0 tiered support will be discussed.

### **Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0 -Tiered Support**

As you are aware, Georgia has exceeded 1% of the recommended alternate assessment (GAA 2.0) participation rate for many years. A waiver from USED had always been approved until last year. To provide additional support, professional learning and technical assistance, a tiered approach will be utilized through designations of universal, targeted and intensive support.

Universal - Participation rates in ELA and/or Math content are between 0.0-1.3%

Targeted - Participation rates in ELA and/or Math content are between 1.4-2.4%

Intensive - Participation rates in ELA and/or Math content are between 2.5% or above

Guidance for the GAA 2.0 has not changed. I am confident by working together that the participation rate can be lowered. The tiered support outlined above will be discussed during the Federal Programs Conference as well as the February Director's Webinar. Your district liaison will be in contact if your LEA has been designated as targeted or intensive. Participation in the professional learning, technical assistance and supports is strongly encouraged but not mandatory.

Your feedback has been heard and valued. The decision-making rubric will stay the same, but your leadership will be needed to lower the participation rate if your LEA is above 1% when examining a historical analysis. Thank you for shaping and supporting a plan to move forward. You have my commitment to partner in lowering the GAA 2.0 participation rate.

### **Federal Programs Conference - GENERAL REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!**

General Registration for the Georgia Department of Education's Federal Programs Conference: District and School Leaders Improving Outcomes for Georgia's Students is open. This is a collaborative initiative from the Offices of Federal Programs, School and District Improvement, Teaching and Learning, Whole Child Supports, Financial Review, Assessment & Accountability, and Rural Education and Innovation.

District and school leaders will receive information to assist with plans for coordinating federal funds in FY25 and supporting newly identified CSI and TSI schools. Participants from Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) should include representatives working with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) grants, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants and selected instructional personnel. Principals at newly identified Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, their direct supervisors, and the district point of contact for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools are required to attend.

This conference will be an in-person event with a modified virtual option. LEA staff not able to join in-person can register for the free live-stream of the general sessions only. All workshop recordings will be available in the GaDOE PL Events catalog after the conference. Join us at the Georgia International Convention Center (GICC) for two days of training and information sharing on February 13-14. [Conference information and registration are available here.](#)

Our new director spotlight is on Courtney Gilbert Murphy from Quitman County School District.

Our own Paula Gumpman dressed as Willy Wonka during the Assistive Technology Industry Association Conference (ATIA) in Orlando, Florida last week. Georgia was recognized for expanding accessible educational materials and assistive technology within the state by the National Center on Educational Materials (CAST). Marietta City Schools and Paulding County Schools shared their work at the conference as a cohort LEA in expanding accessibility and the effective use of assistive technology. Please join me in thanking Paula Gumpman for her unwavering dedication to support to students with disabilities as well as Marietta City Schools and Paulding County Schools for leading the way in Georgia.



*Paula Gumpman holding a cane and dressed in a yellow top hat, yellow bowtie, and a red long coat.*

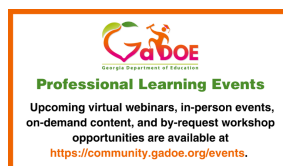


*Football*

As educational leaders, we can learn many lessons from coaches. The coach must be sure there is a team and not just a lot of individuals. Our work is much the same as we are very dependent on each other to support all students. I would love to see the reference to general education and special education fade in the background. We are all on the same team - one educational system for all students.

Thank you for all you do to support students with disabilities. Sending lots of love your way!

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

**February 5** at 1 p.m. Special Education Directors' Webinar

**February 5-8** at 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention: West Georgia

**February 7** at 3:30 p.m. Significant Cognitive Disabilities Best Practices Series

**February 7** at 2 p.m. SSIP FY24: Improving Graduation Rates & the School Completion Toolkit

**February 8** at 1 p.m. Special Education Open Office Hours - CFM

**February 8** at 1:30 p.m. FY24 Special Education Student Record Recovering Rejected Events

## 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](http://www.gahcf.org))

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



*Quitman County Schools logo*

## New Director Spotlight: Courtney Gilbert Murphy, Quitman County Schools

GaDOE is excited to feature Courtney Gilbert Murphy for our New Director Spotlight this week.

Courtney Gilbert Murphy is the Special Education Director for Quitman County Schools and has been in the field of education for 24 years. Ms. Murphy's work experience has ranged from elementary to high school, including working with students in grades K-12 in resource, self-contained, and co-taught classrooms within Florida and Georgia public schools. Previously having the opportunity to

work as an autism site coach and a life skills teacher, Ms. Murphy currently serves as the Special Education Director for Quitman County Schools.

Ms. Murphy shared that her educational career was impacted by her middle school teacher. “She taught us from her motorized wheelchair and her ability to teach us despite her physical disability, touched me daily. The students with disabilities in the building also inspired me to work towards my educational career in special education. I was the one student that would wander away from my peers to peep into the special education classrooms to say hi or interact with the students at lunch and chat with the special education teachers. It was honestly my favorite place to visit within my school.”

A recent graduate of Columbus State University with her Specialist Degree in Special Education, Ms. Murphy enjoys spending time with her family. Her daughter Caleigh, is a 13-year-old middle school student, and her son, Caleb, is currently attending Oglethorpe University. On any given break from school, Ms. Murphy can be found relaxing at a beautiful beach while also splitting her spare time working on her nonprofit organization, Project Kindness, EMG foundation, to provide community events for children with disabilities.



*Arrows*

## **Practice Pointers – Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Excusals: Multiple Members**

### **QUESTION C-2: MAY MORE THAN ONE MEMBER OF AN IEP TEAM BE EXCUSED FROM ATTENDING THE SAME IEP TEAM MEETING?**

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has emphasized in a Questions and Answers Document that there is nothing in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or its implementing regulations, that would limit the number of IEP Team members who may be excused from attending an IEP Team meeting, so long as the public agency meets the requirements of the regulation that governs when IEP Team members can be excused from attending IEP Team meetings in whole or in part. The excusal provisions under the IDEA apply to the following IEP Team

members: 1) The general education teacher(s) of the child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the general education environment); 2) The special education teacher(s) of the child, or where appropriate, the special education provider(s) of the child; 3) A representative of the public agency 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 resources of the public agency; and 4) An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be another member of the IEP Team.

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](#).

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

Quota Atlanta offers the John T. Wheeler Memorial \$5,000.00 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](mailto: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](mailto: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**

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](#).

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.

## **Important Announcement: Disproportionality Data**

Special Education Directors: Your LEA's Disproportionality Data for Identification, Placement, and Discipline is available in the Special Education Applications portal. Please review this data no later than February 9, 2024, and verify its accuracy.

If you have any questions, please contact any of the following individuals:

Linda Castellanos at [lcastellanos@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:lcastellanos@doe.k12.ga.us), 404-719-8045

Dawn Kemp at [dkemp@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:dkemp@doe.k12.ga.us), 678-340-6738

Dominique Donaldson at [dominique.donaldson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:dominique.donaldson@doe.k12.ga.us), 404-796-4589

## **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](mailto:Yyanisha.Bass@doe.k12.ga.us) or Katherine Johnson at [Katherine.Johnson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto: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 1st. 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 15th. Don't hesitate to contact your budget liaison if you have any additional questions.



*Parent to Parent of Georgia  
logo*

## **Parent to Parent February 2024 Trainings**

Webinar: Where Do We Go From Here? 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.  
Date: Wednesday, February 7, 2024  
Time: 6 p.m. - 7 p.m.

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