



January 5, 2024 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education



2024 Happy New Year

Directors,

Happy New Year! Hope your holidays were the best. We celebrated with the entire family together. The cotton candy and snow cone machine will be hard to top next year. The girls were delighted, and their parents loved it enough to take it back to Utah for more fun. On Christmas Eve, we were making cotton candy, snow cones and gingerbread men. Certainly, a Christmas to remember for our family. Even Lucy was in the spirit of the season. As you see in the last picture, Christmas would not be complete without a half-eaten chocolate Santa!



The next Director's Webinar will be Tuesday, January 9, 2024.

Get ready for the Summer Grow program at Roosevelt Warm Springs. Be sure your students have the opportunity to participate in a 4-day employment exploration experience this summer. There will be lots of fun activities including cookouts and recreation. The students will stay in the dorms while participating. The available dates are listed below.

- 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)

Students must meet the criteria listed below to apply.

- Pre-Ets permission form complete
- Current IEP
- Enrollment in a high school
- Independent in all activities of daily living
- Able to ambulate and navigate campus
- Able to self-monitor behavior and agree to follow campus rules

The application will be available in February for Summer Grow but start thinking of great candidates for the program now.

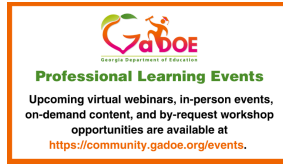


2024 Happy New Year

With a new year, many people want to make resolutions. Some resolutions stick while others are stopped before they even begin. We can all resolve to do our best each day to support students with disabilities.

Thank you for all you do. You are making a difference in so many lives with the guidance and support you provide. I appreciate each of you! Let's make this the best year ever! 2024 is going to be a great year!

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

January 8, 9, 17 & 18 at 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention: Middle GA GLRS

January 9-10 at 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Best Practices: Pre-referral and Evaluation of Multi-Lingual Learners

January 10 at 3:30 p.m. Significant Cognitive Disabilities Best Practices Series: Significant Cognitive Disabilities and the Natural Environment

January 10 at 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Back to Basics: A Guide to Writing Transition Plans (South Central GLRS)

January 10 at 10 a.m. High Leverage Practices (HLPs) 101: Part I

January 10 at 10 a.m. Special Education and School Administrator Academy: Special Education Determinations and Disproportionality

January 11 at 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Deaf/Hard of Hearing Core Components Workshop (CRSA RESA)

January 11 at 10 a.m. Specially Designed Instruction: Instructional Strategies that Work

Reminders

January 17 Parent Survey Opens (SE Applications Dashboard) APR Indicator 8

January 31 Deadline for Excess Cost Calculation Submission (Consolidated Application in GaDOE Portal)

Visit GaDOE Community for a complete listing of GaDOE Professional Learning Events.



Bleckley County Schools logo

District Highlight: Bleckley County

Friday, December 8, 2023, was a day of excitement and Christmas fun for more than 175 students with disabilities who attended the first annual “SEASONAL FRIENDSMAS CELEBRATION” in Bleckley County!

The event was free to all in attendance and sponsored by Bleckley Elementary School’s JitterBug Joe Coffee Cart which is operated by students in Mrs. Riley Troili and Mrs. Scarlett Moore’s third through fifth grade class. Teachers from eight school districts (Bleckley, Dublin City, Laurens, Wheeler, Treutlen, Wilcox, Vidalia, and Montgomery County) who are members of the recently formed SEA (Special Educators Alliance) brought their students to this day of holiday fun which was held at House of Grace Church in Cochran. Students had the opportunity to visit with Santa, hear a story from Auntie Claus (Santa’s much younger sister), enjoy a prize walk, play S-A-N-T-A Bingo, decorate a Christmas cookie, play in the indoor playground, and make a holiday ornament. Mrs. Troili took great care to account for accessibility for all attendees through these measures:

- Visual schedules supported by pictures/symbols for all groups
- Colored wristbands paired with symbols such as Christmas trees for groups
- Visual map of the venue with “Candy Cane” Directional Signposts throughout
- Adaptive “Letters to Santa” templates sent before the event for students to complete with assistance as needed
- Adaptive Holiday Visual Recipe Instructions for Cookie Decorating
- Adaptive “SANTA” Bingo Cards
- Sensory Room/Calm Down Station Availability
- Many invaluable “Elves” and other volunteers who gave their time and heart to this event!

Mrs. Riley Troili, who started the SEA in August 2023, stated, “I am ecstatic at the turnout and more than appreciative of all who volunteered their time to make this possible. Sometimes our students are not invited to parties and similar events or they cannot handle the sensory overload or they may feel awkward in those settings. Mrs. Moore and I hoped that this “SEASONAL FRIENDSMAS CELEBRATION” would be a day that all of these students would feel comfortable, loved and included.”



Arrows

Practice Pointers – Individualized Education Program (IEP): Placement Options

Special education is a service and not a place, and one of the most significant requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is that children with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to the maximum extent appropriate. After the IEP Team has reviewed all required information and developed an IEP, it must make the decision as to where services need to be delivered in order to enable the child to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the LRE. Placement decisions should start with the expectation that services will be provided in the general education setting and should be made on a subject-by-subject basis. The placement decision should be fully supported by the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) and by the level of supports and accommodations/modifications the child requires to access the general education curriculum. Special education and related services are designed to help meet the unique needs of children with disabilities in the LRE. Also, to effectively meet the standards of instruction, children with disabilities in Georgia must be exposed to and held accountable for the Georgia Standards. The IEP Team may not make placement decisions based only on the category of the child's disability, the severity of the disability, the placement options currently available, the availability of educational or related services, space availability, or administrative convenience. The law is also clear that children with disabilities have a right to an equal opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities.

For more information, please see our [Special Education Rules Implementation Manual](#), our [IEP Resources](#) and [Specially Designed Instruction \(SDI\)](#)

webpages, our Parent Information Fact Sheets, and the PROGRESS Center at American Institutes for Research / IEP Tip Sheet PLAAFPs.

FY24 Legal Updates - School Psychologists Webinar

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports is hosting a Technical Assistance online webinar for 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 January 18, 2024 from 1 - 2:30 p.m.

FY24 GaDOE Legal Updates: School Psychologists Registration

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

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.

Important Budget Reminder: Excess Cost Calculation Submission

The Excess Cost Calculation Portal is now open for submissions. The Special Education Excess Cost Calculation, which is part of the local district determination's Timely and Accurate Data Submission Report, is due by January 31, 2024. This submission must be entered into the Consolidated Application and has a two part sign-off for the results and base calculations.

Please plan accordingly as both parts must be submitted by the due date. Resources for the calculation can be found on our budget page here. Please contact your budget liaison for further information or technical assistance.

Section 504

Please verify who is responsible for Section 504 in your LEA and share the following information with the appropriate staff.

School districts with 15 or more employees must designate an employee (sometimes referred to as a Section 504 Coordinator) to coordinate the district's efforts to comply with Section 504.140. In addition to coordinating and monitoring compliance with Section 504 within a school district, Section 504 Coordinators will often distribute Section 504-related forms, documents, and information to parents; provide staff with information about Section 504 policies, practices, and procedures to help ensure that they fulfill their responsibilities in a timely and appropriate manner, respond to parent complaints, and complete other Section 504-related tasks within schools as necessary.

GCASE Scholarships available

GCASE is providing Special Education teachers or Special Education paraprofessionals two scholarships of \$1000 each to continue their education. In addition to the \$1000 for higher education, paraprofessionals who are not CEC members will receive a one-year free CEC membership. To apply, complete the Google Form by February 28.

2024 Theodore Smith Scholarship Application

Language and Literacy in Preschool Trainings Available

Join us for an in-person, day-long workshop designed for teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers of preschool students with disabilities. This session will focus on Language & Literacy that incorporates instruction on phonological awareness, concepts of print, and alphabetic knowledge. Information presented will be based on literacy research and how literacy instruction in the early years impacts reading in elementary school and beyond. Participants will learn to identify a variety of methods for differentiating instruction for all children with a focus on intervention for students with

characteristics of dyslexia.

This Best Practices Training, led by staff from Georgia State University's Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education, provides professional development tools needed to keep Georgia educators at the forefront of current research and field-tested classroom methodology. Each attendee will receive two preschool books with coordinating activities for use in the classroom.

Training will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at each location. Seating is limited so register early. Registration information can be found in the [Georgia Department of Education Professional Learning Catalog](#).

January 19, 2024 – Warner Robins

January 25, 2024 – Albany

February 6, 2024 – Dublin

February 9, 2024 – Rome

February 22, 2024 – Black Creek

February 28, 2024 – Dearing

March 7, 2024 – Athens

March 21, 2024 – Atlanta

If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Ross at Barbara.ross@doe.k12.ga.us or Lynn Holland at lholland@doe.k12.ga.us.

Check and Connect Train the Trainer Training with University of Minnesota

During the last week of November, a group of 15 educators from around the state took the first step in becoming certified Check and Connect Trainers of Mentors by attending the 2 ½ days of training at Middle GA GLRS in Warner Robbins. The training was led by Joe Angaran, a National Check and Connect Trainer, and Sonya Eorio, both from the University of Minnesota.

Check and Connect is an evidence-based intervention for K-12 students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out of school. Of the dropout interventions reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, Check and Connect is the only program found to have strong evidence of positive effects of staying in school.

The demonstrated outcomes of implementing Check and Connect with fidelity

include decrease in truancy, tardies, behavioral referrals, and dropout rates while increasing attendance, persistence in school, credits accrued, and school completion rates with an impact on literacy.

Currently, there are 39 Check and Connect trainers certified to train Check and Connect mentors in the state of Georgia. If you have questions or would like more information, contact Frankie Strickland at frankie.strickland@doe.k12.ga.us.



Georgia Council for Exceptional Children

CEC 2024 Convention & Expo

CEC is offering free registration to their annual convention for building principals and paraprofessionals! This is a savings of \$600 for non-CEC members! Help principals better support your entire team by bringing them to CEC 2024. Register today and bring a principal for free. Have principals register using code 24CEC100.

CEC 2024 Calendar

A Georgia special education student's artwork is featured in CEC's 2024 calendar. Each \$10 purchase of a calendar benefits CEC's "Yes I Can" Fund, one of CEC's endowments designated to support the "Yes I Can" program, which includes recognizing the achievement of students with disabilities each year.

GET READY *For Summer Grow*

COME JOIN US FOR A 4 DAY EMPLOYMENT EXPLORATION EXPERIENCE! WHILE ENJOYING ACTIVITIES ON OUR CAMPUS AT ROOSEVELT WARM SPRINGS AND LIVING IN OUR DORMS, YOU WILL ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES THAT WILL PREPARE YOU FOR YOUR GOALS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL.

Activities Include

- Tour post-secondary programs in our community
- Visit the 7 Career Pathways offered at RWS
- Develop a Transition Toolkit
- Participate in cookouts and recreational activities
- Tour community industry virtually and in person

Dates Available

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Criteria

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- Current IEP
- Enrollment in a high school
- Independent in all activities of daily living
- Able to ambulate and navigate campus
- Able to self-monitor behavior and agree to follow campus rules

The email to submit applications and actual application will be available in February! Start thinking of great candidates today!



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