



Federal Programs

March 28, 2024 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,

It seems like so many years ago but an egg hunt on the last day of school before Easter was a tradition when I was growing up and even when I taught fifth grade students in the 1980s. Hunting eggs is lots of fun especially when there are prize eggs filled with little treats and toys. Such simple enjoyment with the children running to find the eggs makes everyone feel happy. It is difficult to even find hide and seek eggs today. I hope our children now can still find an egg hunt in the community to enjoy. I have shared this before, but our youngest, Ali, would not hunt eggs during the egg hunt with her preschool class when she was 4 years old. I could only watch from my car as I had Chicken Pox at 36 years old - a story for another day. Ali just played on the swings despite urging from her teachers and other adults. When she got home from school, I asked her why she didn't hunt eggs as she loved to find the eggs. She promptly replied with, "Mom, they divide the eggs so everyone has the same number after the hunt so I thought I would just swing." Seemed logical and very much like a little girl that marched to her own beat.

I hope you enjoy the video from 11 Alive News coverage of the [Marietta City Schools' Special Education Teacher Induction Graduation Ceremony](#) held on



Easter bunny with colorful eggs in a basket.

Monday, March 18, 2024.

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency's Summer GROW Program

April 15 is the deadline for the Summer Grow applications at Roosevelt Warm Springs. Send applications to

RWS_Summer_GROW@gvs.ga.gov. Call (706) 542-9579 or (706) 620-0073 with any questions.

April 15th Deadline for Summer Grow Applications at RWS!

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)

Send Applications to

RWS_Summer_GROW@gvs.ga.gov

Call us with any questions at
706-542-9579
OR
706-620-0073

Exceptional Children's Week
April 14-20, 2024

Theme
Championing Tomorrow:
Embracing inclusive technology for all students

Submission Deadline:
April 26, 2024

LEARN MORE:
<https://georgiaexceptionalchildren.org/events/exceptional-childrens-week>

#InclusiveTechnology #ECW2024

This year, Exceptional Children's Week (ECW) will be held April 14-20, 2024

Each year, GA CEC hosts Exceptional Children's Week (ECW) to provide a designated time and space for schools, districts, educators, and families to come together to acknowledge and celebrate students with exceptionalities.

One of the highlights of the week will be the annual art contest. Submissions must focus on this year's theme and may be presented in a format chosen by the student. This can be in an electronic format (i.e. video, PowerPoint, Google Draw, Prezi, Essay, etc.) or in the form of any other multimedia (original artwork, 3D, written work). Creativity is encouraged and the possibilities are endless. It's always exciting to see how students interpret the theme.

We hope you will look forward to this event and participate with enthusiasm! We can't wait to see photos and video clips of celebratory ECW events on social media using **#InclusiveTechnology #ECW2024**

Exceptional Children's Week is coming!

Please join in celebrating Exceptional Children's Week (ECW) in Georgia on April 14-20, 2024. This year's theme is Championing Tomorrow: Embracing Inclusive Technology for all Students.

The Georgia Council for Exceptional Children is excited to see all the ways you and your students have celebrated ECW. Remember to share your celebrations with us by tagging GaCEC on X and Facebook. Art submissions are due by April 26th. The winning student and teacher will both receive a \$50 gift card and

certificate.

USED Dear Colleague Letter on Chronic Absenteeism

The United State Department of Education Department released a Dear Colleague Letter on addressing chronic absenteeism, calling on states to commit to three actions to support students in attending and engaging in school:

-Support schools in increasing regular school attendance through ESEA state plan.

- Access ED resources and training to promote regular school attendance.
- Invest remaining ARP funds in strategies to improve regular school attendance.

The eblast is packed with information today. For many school districts, spring break is scheduled for next week. Please take time to submit a capacity building grant. The application takes less than 5 minutes to complete. An important note - the funds will be available for a full year! Use this opportunity to expand your resources, interventions or professional learning to support students with disabilities.



Purple background with white bunny ears.

Hope your holiday is just perfect for you and your family. Take time for family and friends. Hide the eggs and have an egg hunt. Relax and recharge during spring break. The flowers and trees are really pretty so slow down and take time to enjoy. Most of all, take time for you.

Wishing you a wonderful spring break! Watch for the bunny!

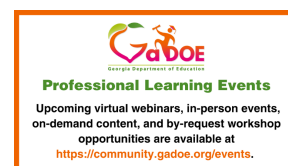
Thank you for all you do each day! You are appreciated and loved.

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

April 9 at 1 p.m. Special Education Directors' Webinar

April 9 - 12 at 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention: Metro West GLRS

April 25 at 1:30 p.m. FY24 Special Education Summer Data Collections

June 11 - 13 at 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Federal Programs Conference: Teachers and Leaders Improving Outcomes

Reminders

March 28 FTE Cycle 3, Student Class, and CPI Final Transmission Date,

Deadline for Superintendent's Sign Off (Data Collections)

April 3 Student Record FY24 Opens (Data Collections) Indicators 1, 2, & 4

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

District Highlight: Bleckley County Schools



Bleckley County Schools logo

Very often, great ideas can come from collaboration and partnerships. That is how Coffee, Cocoa, and Conversations got its start for Riley Troili and Alex Garnto's classes at Bleckley County Elementary School. When Troili met Brittney Faircloth, teacher/director of the Laurens County Showcase Transition Program, several months back in Dublin, GA at an East Central GLRS class for Teachers of Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities, the two immediately realized their shared love and desire to help special needs students realize and achieve their full potential. Although the two are in different counties and Troili teaches the younger students at the elementary level while Faircloth works with young adults, the two are teaming together to diligently pave the way for success for individuals with disabilities.



Coffee and Conversations is a social outing that Faircloth introduced first in her county. Agreeing that this provided a great opportunity to practice a multitude of social, economics, and math and reading skills, Troili adapted it to Coffee, Cocoa, and

Conversations since her students are too young to drink coffee. Each month the two classes join with other adults in their communities to enjoy this social time.

March 14, Faircloth and her team of educators traveled to Cochran with their students to join with the Bleckley County students for Coffee, Cocoa, and Conversations at a community partner, The Mule Barn. The two groups mingled and instantly became friends while making choices, ordering, and paying for their purchases. Laurens County students also taught the Bleckley students to sing Happy Birthday with sign language to surprise their 21-year-old birthday girl, Shakiya, who is deaf. It was definitely a perfect day to make new friends and a learning experience for everyone who participated.





New Director Spotlight: Monica Henderson, Douglas County Schools

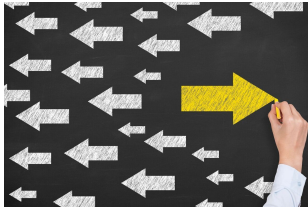
GaDOE is excited to feature Monica Henderson for our New Director Spotlight this week.

Monica Henderson is the Special Education Director for Douglas County Schools and has been in the field of education for 22 years.

Ms. Henderson has worked as a special education teacher for many years, as she began working at the district level as a program specialist. Previously working in both a large Georgia district and a small city school district, Ms. Henderson gained more knowledge working for the GaDOE within the Special Education Services and Supports Division. After serving in that role, Ms. Henderson moved on to becoming an Assistant Director of Special Education within the Douglas County School System, where she is now the Director of Special Education.

Ms. Henderson shared that she was raised by her grandparents and with her grandmother being a retired educator, individuals were always stopping to thank her for all that she had done for them. “She inspired me to help people, like our students, achieve their highest potential and is the reason I went back to get my teaching certificate after earning a Marketing Degree. Of course, along my special education journey, I have had fabulous mentors, professors, and supervisors who have helped shape my love and knowledge of special education,” shared Ms. Henderson.

A single mom to a fifteen-year-old and two cute pups, Ms. Henderson shared that she has a great network of support, loves to travel (the beach is her Zen space), in addition to loving the outdoors, swimming, hiking, and camping.



Practice Pointers – Early Childhood Transition Conference and the Local Educational Agency (LEA)

QUESTION 9: WHAT ARE THE LEA RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO THE TRANSITION CONFERENCE WITH THE EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICE (EIS) PROGRAM OR PROVIDER AND THE FAMILY?

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has emphasized in a [Questions and Answers Document](#) that the LEA must participate in the transition planning conference arranged by the EIS program or provider, and failure to participate would be inconsistent with 34 C.F.R. § 300.124(c). The LEA's failure to attend the transition conference when it was invited by the EIS program or provider makes it difficult for the LEA to meet all of its Part B responsibilities including ensuring that an individualized education program (IEP) is developed and implemented by the child's third birthday (if the child is eligible), as required by 34 C.F.R. § 300.124(b). If the wrong LEA representative was contacted, the LEAs must work with the EIS program or provider to ensure that the appropriate LEA is invited to, and participates in, the transition conference. The importance of the appropriate LEA participating in the transition conference is to ensure that toddlers exiting Part C and eligible for Part B "experience a smooth and effective transition." 34 C.F.R. § 300.124(a). The LEA's participation is critical to its ability to provide the parent with information about Part B preschool services, obtaining parental consent to an evaluation, and conducting eligibility determinations under Part B.

For more information, please see our [Preschool Special Education webpage](#), and the [OSEP Early Childhood Transition Questions and Answers Document](#)

Office of Teaching and Learning: March 21, 2024 Right Now Resources

Welcome Spring - what beautiful weather and such an invitation to develop a full case of Spring Fever! As we move into this calendar space, we know that you as leaders have one foot in the now and one foot in planning for next year. Below you will find information to keep on your radar. Please share as needed

and as always, we are here to serve and support.

Please review the [March 21, 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.

Drawdown of Funds Reminder

This is a reminder to follow your local procedures and GaDOE's general guidance for drawing down funds in accordance with your approved budget and grant expenditures. To ensure that local education agencies (LEAs) are appropriately drawing down available federal grant funds through the first 15 months of the 27-month period of availability, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) monitors the drawdown of funds. Additionally, each LEA's Consolidated Application (Con App) shows the real-time drawdown percentage for each grant. Through the first 15 months, the generally anticipated rate of draw for LEAs running full-year federal program-funded supports and services is as follows.

October 31	up to 27% funds used	April 30	up to 67% funds used
November 30	up to 33% funds used	May 31	up to 73% funds used
December 31	up to 40% funds used	June 30	up to 80% funds used
January 31	up to 47% funds used	July 31	up to 87% funds used
February 28	up to 53% funds used	August 31	up to 93% funds used
March 31	up to 60% funds used	September 30	100% funds used

If you have questions, please contact your IDEA Budget Liaison.



Georgia STABLE logo

Georgia STABLE/Path2College Matching Scholarship

We're thrilled to announce that for the calendar year 2024, OST is once again collaborating with Georgia's Path2College (P2C) 529 Savings Plan and the Georgia STABLE Program to offer the GA STABLE/P2C Matching Scholarship,

which can provide up to \$2,500 to eligible children with disabilities.

A Georgia STABLE account is a way for disabled Georgians to save for qualified expenses and invest for future needs without losing eligibility for certain public benefit programs, like Medicaid or SSI. Georgia STABLE accounts provide financial independence and empowerment for individuals with disabilities by dramatically increasing the ability to save and invest. Georgia STABLE accounts are made possible by the Achieving a Better Life Experience “ABLE” Act passed by Congress in 2014.

To learn more about Georgia STABLE and how to open an account, review the Georgia STABLE/Path2College Matching Scholarship documents and visit the Georgia STABLE webpage.

IDEA Carryover Amendments

Carryover for the IDEA 611 and 619 grants were loaded in December and finalized late January. If your LEA has carryover and has not submitted a carryover amendment, please submit an amendment as soon as possible.

2025 IDEA Documents Available for Public Review and Comment

In order to meet the requirements as set forth by IDEA 2004 for the annual state application of Georgia’s grant award under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for federal fiscal year 2024 (2024-2025), the Georgia Department of Education is publishing the following documents for at least 60 days beginning March 18, 2024 with an opportunity for public comments on such plan to be accepted for at least 30 days.

Your comments should be forwarded to: Wina Low, Division for Special Education Services and Supports at wlow@doe.k12.ga.us

2025 IDEA documents

- Interactive Spreadsheet
- Part B Georgia Fiscal Application
- Notice to Applicants
- State Rules that Exceed IDEA 2004

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