



March 4, 2022 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,



Field of daffodils

“March comes in like a lion and out like a lamb.” We learned this phrase about March as young children, and it still stands true today. March weather can be very unpredictable. Early March is often closer to winter, but we do have beautiful spring days sprinkled throughout the month giving enough hope that warmer days are ahead. March is almost synonymous to me with March flowers or by the proper name, jonquils. These beautiful yellow flowers, that can also be white, give an early sign that spring is on the way. A bouquet of March flowers is cheery, bright and makes me feel very happy! Did you know that jonquils symbolize friendship? By giving jonquils, you are conveying a message of mutual affection and friendship. For those with March birthdays, the jonquil is your birth flower. Did you know that a jonquil is also known as a daffodil? In China, the jonquil is symbolic of good luck. Probably more facts about the jonquil that you ever hoped to know but my message to you is friendship. We are in this journey together and I am so grateful for your leadership and dedication to students with disabilities. Wish I could send a big bouquet of yellow jonquils to each of you! Enjoy the simple pleasures in life!

I am pleased to feature Coastal Plains GLRS for their work with the Teacher/Provider Retention Program. With 11 school districts and 62 participants, the new teacher induction program for special education teachers is making an impact. Way to go District 17!

Our staff spotlight is shining on Dr. Micole Talley. Micole is our 619 Coordinator supporting preschool students with disabilities. Micole is passionate about our youngest students and wants to ensure families are treated with respect and kindness as their children begin their school career. We are fortunate to have a strong advocate with Micole.

Be sure to checkout our new feature called Program Pointers. Each week, our Result Driven Accountability unit will feature short messages with guidance, best practice, compliance and overall general supervision information. This week's tip has a direct link to OSEP's policy guidance. Hope you find this helpful. Let us know if you have a specific suggestion or topic, you would like included.



Bouquet of jonquils

I look forward to seeing each of you at the G-CASE Spring Legal Conference next week in Athens. This conference always provides a welcome opportunity to network with colleagues and hear the latest updates from our legal experts. Remember - you need each other. Build those friendships and connections while learning more about the legal issues we face daily. Our friendships transcend well beyond our work. Make the most of your time together. Friendship is valuable and important. Just picture a big bouquet of yellow jonquils and know you have a friend!

Keeping Students First,
Wina

Special Education Events & Due Dates

Please review for upcoming events and the **Due Dates Calendar** for deadlines and key dates.



Coming Up

March 8 at 1:30 PM – **Data Collections Open Office**

Hours for March 2022 Data Collections Registration Link

March 15 at 1:30 PM – **Data Collections Open Office Hours for March 2022**

Data Collections Registration Link

March 16 at 10:00 AM – **Master Scheduling for Special Education - Part 1**

(FY22 School-Based Administrators PL Series) Registration Link

March 16 at 1:00 PM – **Professional Learning Series for School**

Psychologists (Vision and Hearing) Registration Link

March 16 at 2:00 PM – **Engaging Families for Student Success in**

Secondary Settings (FY22 SSIP Spring PL Series) Registration Link

March 23 at 10:00 AM – **Master Scheduling for Special Education - Part 2**

(FY22 School-Based Administrators PL Series) Registration Link

March 23 at 2:00 PM – **Fostering a Restorative Culture in Secondary**

School Settings (FY22 SSIP Spring PL Series) Registration Link

Reminders

March 9 – Disproportionality Compliance Reviews begin ONLY for applicable LEAs.

March 14 – Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Reconciliation is due for LEAs that do not meet the MOE compliance requirements as shown in the MOE portal.

March 15 – Timelines Prong 2 is due for LEAs that were not 100% in the September 30, 2021 Timelines submission.

March 24 – FTE 3, CPI, and Student Class Data Collections end for all LEAs.

Open through May 31, 2022 – Parent Survey is open in the Special Education Applications Dashboard for LEAs to review results, with hourly updates. Please share the **FY 22 Parent Survey link** in your LEA and encourage participation.

Open through June 15, 2022 – Student Record Data Collection available in the GaDOE Portal



Coastal Plains GLRS logo

from 11 school districts are participating. The teachers range from zero to 3 years experience in special education, with the majority being in their first year of teaching.

Teachers meet once per month to receive High-Leverage Practices (HLP)

District Highlight: Coastal Plains GLRS District 17

District 17 has had tremendous participation in the Teacher Provider Retention Program. 62 participants

training and to participate in Avatar classroom simulations. Coaching is provided to the participants via classroom visits, observations, emails, phone calls and one on one sessions for specialized coaching in IEP writing, co-teaching, SDI, etc.

GaDOE Spotlight: Micole Atkins Talley

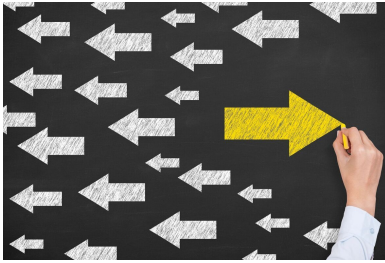
Micole Atkins Talley is the 619 Coordinator for Georgia and has worked in the Division of Special Education Services and Supports for 8 years. During this time, she has worked in the Georgia Online IEP (GO-IEP) and Results Driven Accountability (RDA) units. As the 619 coordinator, Micole supports educators throughout the state providing trainings and technical assistance to improve program implementation and build the capacity of educators serving preschool students with disabilities. She works collaboratively with early childhood partners to develop and promote the improvement of state level support systems for young children in Georgia by serving on statewide committees and planning teams. Additionally, Micole actively chairs committees and contributes to the activities of several national associations and organizations that facilitate policy reviews and revisions to support the establishment of high-quality inclusive classroom environments and strengthen instructional practices for all young children. Prior to coming to GaDOE, Micole served students in both general and special education in multiple instructional and leadership roles in large metro school districts.



*Micole Atkins Talley, 619 Coordinator,
GaDOE Special Education and Student
Supports*

She is currently working with a dynamic team of state leaders and the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) in an intensive data quality cohort. The cohort is closely reviewing current practices utilizing the ECTA systems framework to improve the data collection process and analysis for the Early Childhood Outcomes reported in Georgia. Additionally, Micole is enjoying participating in a book study about preschool instructional practices with preschool administrators and teachers throughout the state.

Micole enjoys reading, traveling, volunteering in her community, and spending time with her family.



Arrows

Program Pointers

The **U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)** issues written guidance to support the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Policy letters provide written guidance and clarification regarding implementation of the IDEA. These are typically issued in response to

specific questions raised by parents, educators, representatives of advocacy organizations, state educational agencies, early intervention programs and their providers, and other interested parties.

OSEP also issues broader written guidance in the form of memos, Dear Colleague Letters, or frequently asked questions (FAQ) documents, as determined appropriate, based on:

- Information gathered through OSEP's oversight of implementation of the IDEA by state educational agencies and Part C lead agencies.
- Stakeholder-identified needs for clarification of the IDEA's provisions.
- Needs identified due to new statutory or regulatory provisions or court cases.

The **Policy Guidance - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act documents** can be searched by topic and date of issuance.

Time is Running Out!: Announcing the Awards of Excellence

It's time to recognize our outstanding seniors. The Division for Special Education Services and Supports is asking districts to nominate an outstanding senior from your district who have demonstrated excellence while navigating their challenges. Excellence can be categorized as:

- Outstanding academic achievement
- Outstanding athletic achievement
- Innovative use of technology
- Exemplary growth in social/peer relationships; participation in organizations and clubs
- Exemplary participation in the Arts (creative writing, visual arts, performing arts)



Awards

- Exemplary involvement in the community
- Acceptance into one of the branches of the military

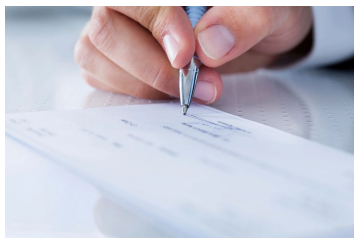
Make your nominations using this **Awards of Excellence 2022 electronic form**. Submissions must be made by **Wednesday, March 23, 2022**.

Applications will be reviewed by the Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Support staff. There will be one winner from each GLRS region.

The virtual celebration and recognition of the winners will be in May. The date and time will be announced after the submission deadline.

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

Don't miss out on this opportunity to spotlight the outstanding achievement of a senior in your school district.



Person filling out an application

Accessible Formats Requests

Please submit all new braille, large print, and digital textbook transcription requests as soon as possible. Keep in mind that all braille requests should be submitted with a *pacing guide* detailing the order in which the student will be using the book. The *Accessible Book Spreadsheet* that IEP teams can use to collect the names of the textbooks students will most likely be used for the upcoming school year. The tool includes a link to the Louis Plus database. That database provides information on the accessible formats available for thousands of textbook titles.

Support Personnel Professional Development: MTSS & Child Find: Keeping Students First

The time is approaching for the next professional development session for support personnel. This session will cover Multi-tiered Systems of Supports and Child Find and will be held on Thursday, February 10th from 1:00pm-3:00pm. Use the link below to join the session.

Join the session: **MTSS & Child Find: Keeping Students First**



People watching a presentation

If you have questions, contact the Program Specialist for your area below.

- Evelyn Dixon, Program Specialist, Speech-Language Pathologists at edixon@doe.k12.ga.us
- Elise James, Program Specialist, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy at ejames@doe.k12.ga.us
- Alicia Mercer, Program Specialist, School Psychologists at amercer@doe.k12.ga.us

U.S. Department of Education IDEA Equitable Services Revised Guidance

The U.S. Department of Education has announced the release of newly revised IDEA equitable services guidance under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The document, *Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed By Their Parents in Private Schools* revised February 2022 updates and supersedes the Department's April 2011 guidance and includes additional questions and answers that address topics that have arisen as the field continues to implement the applicable provisions of IDEA and its implementing regulations.



U.S. Department of Education
logo



People in a group giving high fives

MTSS Snapshot: Maintaining Tiered Supports

“**March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb**” is a proverb or saying that has roots in weather folklore. The proverb has been related to the strong winds that sweep in with March, and by the end of the month, the winds have calmed

like a lamb as spring is ushered in with the change of seasons. Although a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is not related to weather, the saying about March may give us reason to pause and consider where we are in the implementation of MTSS. Are the practices and commitments to MTSS like the strength of lions or the softness of lambs? Consider the following questions:

- Did we begin implementation with a strong commitment to implement MTSS with fidelity?
- As the school year has moved forward, have you maintained that strong commitment for MTSS fidelity?

- Is on-going, job embedded professional learning targeted at fidelity of implementation, and is it designed to meet the needs of the teachers?
- Have educators in the schools developed a deeper understanding of MTSS and the associated practices?
- Is infrastructure, i.e., leadership, effective teaming, professional learning, and parent and family engagement, attended to throughout the school year to prevent and address barriers to implementation?
- Is there a plan in place to sustain the work of MTSS as it develops and becomes part of the culture of the school?

Like the March winds, it is important to maintain a strong focus and commitment to implementing MTSS with fidelity. The website for **Georgia's Tiered System of Supports** includes many resources that may help guide the work toward fidelity. Consider the *Fidelity of Implementation Rubrics: District and School levels* for whether the implementation is new or has been in progress. The rubric(s) will assist in developing next steps for your work.

Additionally, as you continue the MTSS work, it is important that time be set aside for practical planning for continued work around a tiered system of supports. Sustaining the work districts and schools have invested is important and developing a sustainability plan will assist in continuing, expanding, and optimizing the work. The emphasis of such a plan is in identifying priority areas for program sustainability while developing goals, objectives, strategies, and action steps for a successful plan.

For additional information, feel free to reach out to the MTSS regional coaches or Karen Suddeth, ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us to learn more.

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Federal Programs

March 11, 2022 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,



It was so great to see everyone at G-CASE Spring Legal Conference in Athens! Wonderful to be in-person with friends again. Friends, colleagues and relationships matter. So glad that we have each other.

Pot of gold under a rainbow and a leprechaun hat

It is only fitting that this week is the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) - Exceptional Children's Week. CEC is also celebrating their 100th anniversary. The anniversary theme is "Celebrating the Past, Committed to the Future." Just imagine all the lives impacted by this organization over the last 100 years.

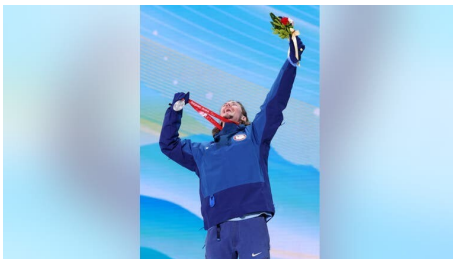
We also celebrated School-Based Speech Language Pathologists this week by proclamation of Governor Brian Kemp. As the proclamation reads, "Speech Language Pathologists are crucial to each school's special education team and are invaluable support resources for classroom teachers, guidance counselors and parents." Please join me in thanking all our SLPs for a job well done!

Next week, we will celebrate St. Patrick's Day on the 17th. Hope your day includes leprechauns, clover, lots of green and a pot of gold. Speaking of a pot of gold, I know that Cartersville City Schools is celebrating the accomplishment

of their former student, Garrett Geros. After losing part of his left leg in a car accident in 2016, Garrett won a silver medal in the snowboard cross event at the 2022 Winter Paralympics in Beijing on Sunday. Garrett said, "I wanted to be proof that something positive can come out of the most difficult circumstances." He continued by saying, "...I'm living my dream."

Our spotlight this week is on East Central GLRS, I CAN Conference. In conjunction with Heart of Georgia RESA, East Central GLRS will host the I CAN Conference on March 22, 2022. Be sure to read the full article to learn more. I am so proud of your work!

This week's staff spotlight is shining on Phoebe Atkins. Phoebe is a Program Specialist on the GO-IEP and Data Team. For those of you that know her, you understand the fabulous support she provides. It might be a surprise to learn that she started kindergarten in Turkey and has lived in multiple states. Phoebe is also very musically talented.



Silver medal winner Garrett Geros of Team USA celebrates on the podium during the medal ceremony for the Men's Snowboard Cross SB-LL2 Big Final. (Photo by Lintao Zhang/Getty Images)

Our eblast is packed with many resources this week. Of particular importance as transition fairs are being held, please be sure your district uses the supported decision-making approach to provide a continuum of options to students and their families when reaching the age of majority. See the full article and resources in this week's message.

My heart is full of joy and hope after being with everyone this week in Athens. Your leadership, courage and dedication are so inspiring. The future is very bright. The G-CASE Administrator's Development Academy also reinforced the future is in good hands with our next generation of leaders. I am so proud of how you take care of each other to ensure quality services for students with disabilities. I feel like I have already found a pot of gold with your friendship.

Keeping Students First,
Wina

Special Education Events & Due Dates

Please review for upcoming events and the **Due Dates Calendar** for deadlines and key dates.



Latest news

Coming Up

March 15 at 1:30 PM – Data Collections Open Office Hours for March 2022 Data Collections Registration Link

March 16 at 10:00 AM – Master Scheduling for Special Education - Part 1 (FY22 School-Based Administrators PL Series) Registration Link

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March 23 at 10:00 AM – Master Scheduling for Special Education - Part 2 (FY22 School-Based Administrators PL Series) Registration Link

March 23 at 2:00 PM – Fostering a Restorative Culture in Secondary School Settings (FY22 SSIP Spring PL Series) Registration Link

March 30 at 2:00 PM – Ensuring Fidelity of Implementation of Check and Connect (FY22 SSIP Spring PL Series) Registration Link

Reminders

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Open through June 15, 2022 – Student Record Data Collection available in the GaDOE Portal

Coming this July:

- July 30 – Continuation of Services opens in SE Applications.
- July 30 – Budget Completion Reports Deadline for all State Grants for FY21.
- July 31 – CCEIS/CEIS FY22 Student Events Data Due for applicable LEAs.
- July 31 – CCEIS/CEIS Plan for FY23 Due for applicable LEAs.
- July 31 – Preschool Exit Data (FY22 Data) are due.
- July 31 – Post-School Outcomes (for FY 20-21 Exiters) are due.



District Highlight: East Central GLRS I CAN Conference

Heart of Georgia Transition Alliance in collaboration with East Central GLRS will host the region's I CAN Conference on March 22, 2022, at the Oconee Fall Line Technical College. This conference is for students with disabilities in grades 10-12, district and school administrators, and teachers of students attending the conference from the Heart of Georgia Region, Johnson County School District, and the Georgia Academy for the Blind. The conference focuses on providing students with the tools and motivation to "I CAN." Breakout sessions will include Banking, interviewing skills, health, wellness, nutrition and exercise, college admissions requirements, ASPIREPlus and self-determination, and Q& A sessions with employers and the local technical college.

A highlight of the conference is the participation of the ASPIRE Ambassadors, representing Dodge, Bleckley, Treutlen, Telfair, and Pulaski counties, as conference moderators, greeters, and room facilitators. The ASPIRE Ambassadors is a leadership building program that compliments the states' student-led IEP initiative. It has been operating in the East Central GLRS region since 2016 and has expanded to include elementary school students who are mentored by older Ambassadors. A former Ambassador was the recipient of the 2020 Award of Excellence.

GaDOE Spotlight: Phoebe Atkins

Phoebe Atkins has been a Program Specialist with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Division for Special Education Services and Supports for 5 years serving on the GO-IEP and Data Team supporting districts in north Georgia related to Special Education Data Collections and implementation of GO-IEP. Prior to joining the GaDOE team, she was a special education teacher, school leader and district leader with the Bartow County School System for both special education and preschool students (Georgia PK). While in Bartow, she worked with

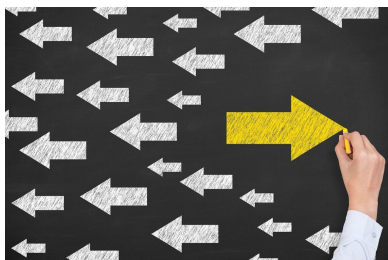


Phoebe Atkins, Program Specialist, GaDOE Special Education and Student Supports

teachers and school leaders to develop tools and provide professional development to strengthen IEP development as well as increase student input into their IEP starting with young children. She also focused on co-teaching strategies, developing trainings for both teacher teams as well as school leaders to increase inclusion practices across the district. Another key initiative was to create a system level special education teacher leadership academy to grow special education teacher leaders.

Recently, Phoebe has worked with the other members of the GO-IEP Team to develop and published four professional development courses that are available to districts across Georgia to allow new staff to receive training to more effectively implement GO-IEP. She has also updated videos and resources to support local districts to better utilize GO-IEP and report their special education data during Special Education Data Collections.

Phoebe grew up as an Air Force brat and started Kindergarten while her family was living in Izmir, Turkey. She lived in 4 states in the US and visited 34 of the states, as well as living or visiting countries outside of the US. When her father retired from the military when she was entering middle school, they drove across country to move back to Georgia where both her parents grew up. She loves travelling and seeing new places, although she has not been able to do this over the last few years. Phoebe has a background in music (Music Minor as part of her Bachelor's degree) and enjoys singing and playing the piano. She collects various musical instruments. Some unique instruments that she has include: a bowed psaltery, a plucking stick, a lap harp and a dulcimer. She also enjoys reading and love animals. She has four dogs, all of whom were rescues, as well as four cats. Phoebe and her husband, Richard, have been married for 27 years. They have one daughter and a grandson with another granddaughter on the way, which they are very excited about.



Arrows

Program Pointers

As we prepare for annual reviews, here are a few reminders about the role of the ESOL teacher for students who are both English Learners and students with disabilities, or are suspected of having a disability. The ESOL teacher should be given sufficient notice of upcoming SST/IEP meetings so they can

adequately prepare to provide input.

During the **SST process**, the ESOL teacher should share expertise about:

- The expected timeframe and stages of 2nd language acquisition.

- Determining if a suspected disability exists or if the concerns are most likely due to 2nd language acquisition.
- The language spoken in the home was well as cultural norms to be considered, and serve as home-school connection with parents/guardians.
- Interventions that are evidence based for ELs, or ways to scaffold language for interventions without compromising the fidelity of the intervention.

During an **IEP meeting**, the ESOL teacher should attend all IEP meetings and come prepared to:

- Share recent ELP (ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS) scores, and what they mean.
- Share Scale Score Growth from ACCESS report history.
- Discuss WIDA performance definitions to help with goal setting.
- Explain ACCESS/Alt ACCESS accommodations so that appropriate choices can be made. (Remember, Georgia Milestones accommodations are not the same as ACCESS/Alt ACCESS accommodations!)
- Discuss scheduling and ensure that BOTH Special Education and ESOL services are in place.

As a final note, remember that one program does not "trump" the other. Per OCR, EL/SWDs must receive both services. Additional guidance related to the provision of services for EL/ SWD students can be found here: **POLICY LETTER: November 15, 2021 to Boals - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

Remember! Nominate a Student for the 2022 Awards of Excellence

It's time to recognize our outstanding seniors. The Division for Special Education Services and Supports is asking districts to nominate an outstanding senior from your district who have demonstrated excellence while navigating their challenges. Excellence can be categorized as:

- Outstanding academic achievement
- Outstanding athletic achievement
- Innovative use of technology
- Exemplary growth in social/peer relationships; participation in organizations and clubs
- Exemplary participation in the Arts (creative writing, visual arts, performing arts)
- Exemplary involvement in the community



Awards

- Acceptance into one of the branches of the military

Make your nominations using this **Awards of Excellence 2022 electronic form**. Submissions must be made by **Wednesday, March 23, 2022**.

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

Don't miss out on this opportunity to spotlight the outstanding achievement of a senior in your school district.



People watching a presentation

Support Personnel Professional Development: Dyslexia - A Collaborative Approach

The last session of the Support Personnel professional development series is approaching. This session will be held on Thursday, March 24th from 1:00pm-3:00pm. Use the link below to join the session.

Join the session: **Dyslexia - A Collaborative Approach**

If you have questions, contact the Program Specialist for your area below.

- Evelyn Dixon, Program Specialist, Speech-Language Pathologists at edixon@doe.k12.ga.us
- Elise James, Program Specialist, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy at ejames@doe.k12.ga.us
- Alicia Mercer, Program Specialist, School Psychologists at amercer@doe.k12.ga.us

Supported Decision Making: Considerations when students with disabilities reach the age of majority

When the student reaches the age of adulthood where the transfer of rights happens, there are decisions that



People in a group giving high fives

the adult student and parent may need to consider. In this continuum, guardianship is the most restrictive option on the continuum and supported-decision making is the least restrictive. Full guardianship is rarely necessary when considering the support students might need and should be reserved for students with the most significant disabilities. Even then, some of these students may be able to continue to thrive under less restrictive options. Be sure to provide the student and parents with resources for supported decision making when discussing options needed to support students with disabilities as transfer of rights are discussed. It is vital to remember that these decisions are **family decisions**. All resources and agencies that can help the student and parent with this discussion should be provided. Below is the link to a recording of the webinar about supported decision making and continuum of options. Please ensure your special education teachers, coordinators, parent mentors, counselors, school psychologists and school leadership are familiar with this information. Even with the best of intentions, advising full guardianship may restrict rights and dignity unnecessarily if a less restrictive option could provide the same protections and safeguards. Using the full continuum of options is the right choice to support the student and family through this decision-making process.

Transfer of Rights and Decision-Making Options for Adult Students Webinar Recording



Parent to Parent of Georgia logo

Parent to Parent Trainings

Topic: DPH Online Workshop for Parents & Caregivers on Transitioning to Adult HealthCare

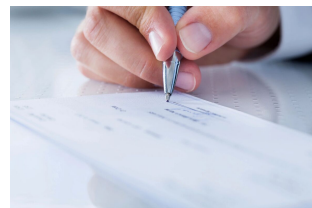
This is a virtual opportunity to learn about transition planning, tools and resources available to help young adults become better prepared to manage their health care needs, in addition there will be a specific focus on alternatives to guardianship.

Date: Thursday, March 17th at 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM EDT

DPH Online Workshop Registration Link

IDEA Grant Application

Our **IDEA grant application** has been posted for 60-day public comment. We would love any feedback you may have.



Please email Wina Low at wlow@doe.k12.ga.us with your comments.

Person filling out an application



Children in a classroom

Statewide Preschool Consortia Meeting

We are excited to share this invitation to attend our second statewide preschool consortia meeting for the 2021-2022 school year. The meeting will be held on March 15, 2022 from 2:30 – 4:00 PM. Please share the meeting invitation with district leaders, school leaders, related service providers, and teachers. The meeting will be recorded.

Feel free to contact Micole Atkins Talley mtalley@doe.k12.ga.us with any questions or concerns.

Preschool Special Education Statewide Consortia Meeting Registration Link

SSIP Admin and Spring PL Series

The fifth installment of the School-Based Administrator's Special Education Professional Learning Series will be presented on Wednesday, March 16th at 10:00 AM. Chanda Harris, Metro South GLRS Director, will be the featured speaker. This session focuses on the planning, implementation, and monitoring process of scheduling the building to promote student achievement and teacher growth. The presenters will provide a Guide for LRE Scheduling, guiding questions, monitoring protocols and sample schedules. Several ways to build in common planning time for co-teaching will be shared.



People watching a presenter

School-Based Administrator's Special Education Professional Learning Series Registration Link

The next session in SSIP's Spring Professional Learning Series is scheduled for Wednesday, March 16th at 2:00 PM. Anne Ladd, GaDOE Family Engagement Specialist, and Julie Hardeman, Parent Mentor with the Savannah-Chatham Public School System, will be presenting on "Engaging families for student success in secondary settings."

SSIP's Spring Professional Learning Series Registration Link

Tech Tip AT and AEM

Take aim at reading! A.E.M. stands for **accessible educational materials** which

are print and electronic text produced in a way to fully make them usable by all. Examples are: braille, large print, audio recordings, and electronic files. For AEM to be most effective, materials that provide the content of the curriculum and technologies used to deliver those materials need to be accessible. To learn more, please visit the **National Center on Accessible Educational Materials webpage**.

MTSS Snapshot: Maintaining Tiered Supports

Infrastructure is an essential component of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Included in this component is Leadership, Effective Teaming, Professional Learning, and Parent and Family Engagement. Effective and supportive leadership when implementing MTSS is not only essential but also critical to ensuring success. Decisions and actions by school and district leaders should proactively support the essential components of MTSS which will ensure the framework implementation is far more effective. Furthermore, strong leadership will assist in ensuring that district and school infrastructure, resources, and processes are aligned to make certain that the needs of all students are met through use of the framework.

“A leader’s job is to look into the future and see the organization, not as it is, but as it should be.”
(M. Anderson)

A leader's job is to look into the future and see the organization, not as it is, but as it should be. - M. Anderson

When thinking about leadership in a school, it does not all rest at the administrators’ feet. Leadership must be shared and cascaded throughout the school when implementing a system or framework as comprehensive as MTSS. From the administrative team to the school/building leadership team and beyond, it is important that the messaging is consistent and clear. Leaders should consider the following as implementation begins:

- Cast a clear vision for all stakeholders and place importance on MTSS as a priority.
- Develop a positive school culture built around MTSS practices.
- Focus on Tier I instruction with a viable curriculum, evidence-based practices, high leverage practices, and differentiation for learners.
- Ensure on-going, job embedded professional learning is targeted at fidelity of implementation and designed to meet the needs of the teachers.

- Attend to shared leadership, effective teaming, professional learning, and parent and family engagement throughout the school year to prevent and address barriers to implementation.
- Identify and remove barriers to fidelity of implementation.

There are several elements to the role of effective leaders when implementing MTSS. The website for **Georgia's Tiered System of Supports** includes many resources that may help guide the work toward fidelity. Included on the website is a *Fact Sheet about Leadership* for MTSS. Also, consider the *Fidelity of Implementation Rubrics (District and School levels)* whether the implementation is new or has been in progress. The rubric(s) will assist in developing next steps for your work.

For additional information, feel free to reach out to the MTSS regional coaches or Karen Suddeth, ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us to learn more.

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March 25, 2022 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,

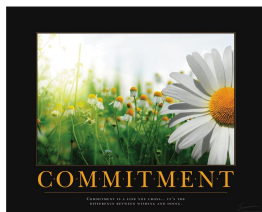


Compass with commitment

This week has offered many opportunities and challenges. I know you can certainly relate. Despite the challenges, and even frustration at times, several great outcomes have resulted. When there is progress or success, regardless of how incremental, it still counts as a win! Commitment is the key to staying the course. Commitment simply means being dedicated to a cause or activity. It can also mean a pledge, promise or even an obligation. Vince Lombardi is quoted as saying, “The quality of a person’s life is in direct proportion to their commitment, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.” Please know that I am committed to supporting district and school administrators, teachers, families, and most importantly, students.

Speaking of commitment, I hope you will take the time to view the video shared by Dr. Ken Banter from Federal Programs. Dr. Banter serves on a local board in Peach County that provides employment opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities. Several clients of the Kay Center participate in Special Olympics with some athletes reaching the International Special Olympics. Today’s eblast is featuring Dion in a Jersey Mike’s advertisement for the Special Olympics. **Day of Giving 2022 - 30 Sec - YouTube** He is a weightlifter with maximum lifts of Squat at 300lbs, Bench at 240lbs, and Deadlift at 450lbs. Sounds like a lot of weight! Outside of Special Olympics,

Dion works daily at Cascade Corporations in Warner Robins on the assembly making parts for side shifters on forklifts. He has been competing in Special Olympics and Open Powerlifting events since 1999. In 2015, Dion traveled to La Manga, Spain to complete IPF training to receive his Level II Coaches Certification. He has used his knowledge in his daily powerlifting training. Dion has competed in the United States, Puerto Rico, Czech Republic, Dubai, Sweden, and Luxemburg. He will be representing Georgia in the USA Games in powerlifting in early June. I know you will enjoy watching the video and learning more of Dion's and Jersey Mike's commitment. Dion's journey is a perfect example of self-determination. His story involves, personal commitment, community commitment as well as a national business committed to supporting students and adults with disabilities. This example is exactly how it should work. Let's stay committed so all students with disabilities can live life to the fullest!



*Plant with the word
commitment*

Our highlights this week feature Northeast Georgia RESA's Shared Services and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Partnership. Please read their story of regional services. What a great example of collaboration. Leading by example with a commitment to students with disabilities!

I have also included Paulding County's MTSS newsletter in this week's district highlights. I know you will enjoy reading their updates. I am really proud of their work.

Our staff spotlight is shining on Lakesha Stevenson. Lakesha is the epitome of professionalism and commitment. We are so fortunate to have Lakesha on our team!

The eblast is loaded with information this week. Please also share with staff as appropriate.

I am inspired by your commitment to students with disabilities. Thank you for all you do each day. Your commitment is making a difference!

"Commitment is what transforms a promise into a reality." Source: Abraham Lincoln

Keeping Students First,
Wina

Special Education Events & Due Dates

Please review for upcoming events and the **Due Dates Calendar** for deadlines and key dates.



Latest news

Coming Up

March 28 at 3:00 PM – Self-Determination Community of Practice Meeting Link

March 30 at 2:00 PM – Ensuring Fidelity of Implementation of Check and Connect (FY22 SSIP Spring PL Series) Registration Link

April 7 at 1:30 PM – FY22 Special Education Summer Data Collections for Special Education Registration Link

April 12 at 1:00 PM – Special Education Directors’ Webinar Meeting Link

April 13 at 2:00 PM – The Cycle of Specially Designed Instruction (SDI): Align, Plan, Implement, and Monitor (FY22 SSIP Spring PL Series) Registration Link

Reminders

April 20 – Disproportionality Compliance Reviews end for applicable LEAs.

Open through May 31, 2022 – Parent Survey is open in the Special Education Applications Dashboard for LEAs to review results, with hourly updates. Please share the **FY 22 Parent Survey link** in your LEA and encourage participation.

Open through June 15, 2022 – Student Record Data Collection available in the GaDOE Portal

Coming this July:

- July 30 – Continuation of Services opens in SE Applications.
- July 30 – Budget Completion Reports Deadline for all State Grants for FY21.
- July 31 – CCEIS/CEIS FY22 Student Events Data Due for applicable LEAs.
- July 31 – CCEIS/CEIS Plan for FY23 Due for applicable LEAs.
- July 31 – Preschool Exit Data (FY22 Data) are due.
- July 31 – Post-School Outcomes (for FY 20-21 Exiters) are due.



March 24, 2022 Letter to Educators and Parents Regarding New CDC Recommendations and Their Impact on Children with Disabilities

Today, Education Secretary Miguel Cardona wrote a

letter to educators and parents regarding new Centers for Disease Control recommendations and the recommendations' impact on children with disabilities. This letter addresses the needs of students with disabilities as we move into a new phase in our response to the pandemic.

Letter to Educators and Parents Regarding New CDC Recommendations and Their Impact on Children with Disabilities

(March 24, 2022)

For additional COVID-19 resources relating to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and OSERS, please go to **Program Information: FAQs and Responses — Special Education & Rehabilitative Services** page. You can also find more COVID-19 resources on ED's **Disability Rights** and **COVID-19 Resources for Schools, Students, and Families** pages.

District Highlight: Northeast Georgia RESA Regional Deaf/Hard of Hearing Partnership

Powerful things happen when 13 school districts partner together to ensure students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing receive exemplary specially designed instruction!

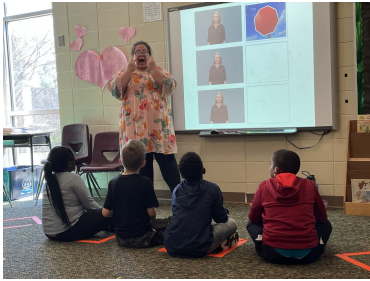


Students watching a teacher

The 13 school systems in Northeast Georgia RESA Region 5 have partnered together to establish Shared Services programming for all Special Education Related Services (Audiology, OT, PT, and O&M) and the low incidence eligibility areas of Visual Impairment and Deaf/Hard of Hearing. One very meaningful instructional option to emerge from this valuable partnership is the Regional Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) program. Although itinerant D/HH services remain available for students whose LRE is their home school, the Regional D/HH program was established to ensure specialized instruction for D/HH students who have significant language and literacy needs.

Northeast Georgia RESA's Regional D/HH program currently serves 31 students ranging in age from 3 - 20 years old. Districts transport their students to a centrally located elementary, middle, and high school; ensuring they have access to individualized learning throughout the day in their least restrictive environment. Whether a student accesses content through listening and spoken language, ASL, or a combination of both, the highly skilled staff of certified D/HH Teachers, ASL Interpreters, and Para Educators in the Regional Program

work to ensure they are successful.



Teacher presenting in front of sitting students

The instructional needs of students in the Regional D/HH program vary from gifted students who access most of their instruction in the general education environment to students who receive the majority of their specialized instruction from a certified D/HH teacher. Beyond meeting the instructional needs of all students, the Regional D/HH Program provides a rich environment of Deaf culture, ASL native language models from Deaf adults, socialization and

communication with D/HH peers, and development of accessible video resources that include closed captioning and ASL.

Given the size and rural nature of the 13 districts in Region 5, it would not be possible for any one district to provide the quality of instructional services offered in Northeast Georgia RESA's Shared Services Regional D/HH program. However, by partnering together they have established an out-of-the-box solution to meet the learning needs of all students in a truly impactful way.

Newsletter Shoutout: Paulding County

We want to shoutout an amazing **newsletter from Paulding County**. Not only did each of the six district coaches highlight one of the schools they support, but they also are building sustainability. Communication and sharing are key when working to provide solutions and this newsletter showcases one of the many ways we can all work together to provide tools to better serve our students and communities.



Preview of Paulding County newsletter

As Junie B. Jones always says, “Wowie, wow, wow, wow!” This is an impressive newsletter!

Special Olympics Highlight:



Special Olympics 2022 logo

Day of Giving

We would like to highlight an incredible example of community collaboration with the Kay Community Service Center in Peach County to support the Special Olympics. One of Peach County's own is being featured in a **Jersey Mike's advertisement video** providing him with a wonderful opportunity to not only showcase his weightlifting talent, but also to take part in showcasing the Day of Giving being held on March 30.

Congratulations Dion, and we look forward to cheering you on as you represent Georgia in competition!

GaDOE Spotlight: Lakesha Stevenson

Lakesha Stevenson is a Program Specialist and has worked in the field of education for 20 years. During her almost 6 years at DOE, she has worked in Georgia Online IEP (GO-IEP) and Results Driven Accountability (RDA). In her current role with GNETS, she provides support to GNETS programs throughout the state providing technical assistance to improve program implementation and proactively seeks opportunities to improve programming for students receiving GNETS services. She works collaboratively with multi-agency partners to develop and promote the improvement of state level support systems in behavioral health for children in Georgia by serving on statewide committees and planning teams. Prior to coming to GaDOE, she worked in special education instructional and leadership roles in large metro school districts.

Lakesha handles guidance on implementation of the GNETS Strategic Plan activities.

In Lakesha's spare time, she enjoys traveling, trying new restaurants and cuisines, spending time with family and watching sports, especially Auburn University football, and the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Program Pointers

The *Individualized Education Program (IEP)* serves as the framework for determining the meaning of the term a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE), a term frequently referenced

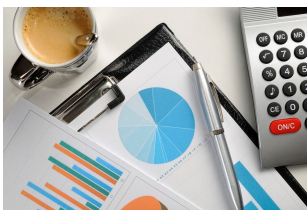


Arrows

in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IEPs must be developed and reviewed annually and must be in effect at the beginning of each school year. The IEP may be reviewed more than once a year if the parent or the local educational agency (LEA) requests a review.

The *present levels of academic achievement and functional performance* section of the IEP establishes the starting point or baseline that is used to develop the entire IEP. In addition to a description of the child's current academic, developmental, and/or functional strengths and needs; the results of district or statewide assessments; an explanation of how the disability affects the child's participation in the regular education curriculum; any concerns of the parent; and, for preschool children, the impact of the disability on participation in age-appropriate activities, the *present levels of academic achievement and functional performance* should also include the following: **Results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the child.** These evaluation results will include a summary of the relevant information from the child's evaluation (not just a listing of scores). This section does not have to include only the results and recommendations of formal evaluation measures performed on a child. It should also include additional formative and summative assessments used for instructional purposes that are often more recent than the formal evaluation measures.

Please visit our website for more [IEP Resources](#), to include a [2019 Guide to Writing IEPs Training Series](#).



Graphs and data with a calculator

Important State Funding Update

Fiscal agents for the State Preschool Disability Grant and State GNETS Grant will receive additional FY22 funding which must be expended and drawn down by June 30, 2022. This funding includes a one-time supplement, as well as funding to restore previous austerity cuts in these state categorical grants. Details for the one-time supplement were sent to K12 Finance Officers on March 24, 2022. Please review the frequently asked questions (FAQs) for the one-time supplement. Additionally, we have included the total FY22 allocations for these grants for your convenience. The funds will be loaded into the Consolidated Application no later than April 1st. Please complete budget amendments for these funds as soon as possible. You may reach out to your budget liaisons if you have additional questions.

State Funding Update Documents

Tech Tips

These are helpful reminders of why the tools are important. Modeling these tools is the most effective way to create resource awareness in your students. Set a goal of modeling these tools at least three times a week.



Texthelp logo

Read&Write Tech Tips

Supporting Academic Language with Dictionary, Pic Dictionary & Translation

This week's Read&Write tech tip focuses on using the Dictionary, Picture Dictionary, and Translation tools to support academic language and sheltered instruction in web pages, documents, and PDFs. Remember, modeling Read&Write for your students at least three times a week will increase their resource awareness and independence!

Creating Academic Word Lists using Read&Write's Highlighters & Vocab Tools

This week's tech tip can help you quickly create universally designed academic word lists and scaffolded notes using Read&Write's Highlighters and Vocabulary Tool. The coolest part? Your students can also use these tools to create word lists for themselves! Watch the 4 minute video below to see how!

EquatIO Tech Tips

Getting Your Students Started With EquatIO

This is a helpful video to share with students as they begin their journey with EquatIO. It would probably be a good watch for some of your teachers as well.

Create, Share, Score, & Feedback With EquatIO Mathspace

The short video linked below illustrates how teachers can use their instructional design skills to create engaging and innovative mathspaces for their students to complete and turn in no matter the learning model. Teachers can then collect the mathspaces, score them if they wish, and provide immediate feedback

Get Creative With EquatIO Mathspace By Importing Files

The short video linked below illustrates how EquatIO has a large robust collection of Shapes and SmartShapes in Mathspace. However, if we don't

quite have what you are looking for, you can import your own files to make exciting and engaging Mathspaces for your students.



Two people shaking hands

Education Program Manager for Outreach

A job posting for the new Education Program Manager for Outreach is available for submitting applications.

Job Duties

Provides leadership in the administration of Department's Family Engagement/Parent Mentor Partnership and the Special Education Helpdesk. Serves as the Special Education Ombudsman as a neutral party for families and local educational agencies (LEAs) to mitigate contentious relationships. This position will also collaborate across divisions within the state educational agency (SEA). Duties include: providing direct leadership and coordination in the continuous improvement of the Parent Mentor Partnership, family engagement initiatives, Special Education Helpdesk and other proactive prevention processes as it relates to school districts and families of students with disabilities. Serves as a key collaborator with stakeholders to develop and implement statewide efforts to support family engagement at the state, regional, and local levels; make recommendations for changes and improvements based on research and evaluation data; communicate program plans and policies; and supervise professional education staff. Will support the State Advisory Panel (SAP) in collaboration with the State Director. Duties also include conducting training and professional learning activities, providing specialized support to LEAs, developing reports, and presentation materials.

Position is field based. Minimal travel will be required. Posting closes on April 5, 2022. All applications must be submitted through GaDOE Human Resources following established protocol and required documentation. See full posting for complete details. You can find the **Mgr, Education Prgm position listing** on the Team Georgia Careers webpage.

Parent to Parent Trainings

Topic: Georgia Medicaid Basics and Katie Beckett Deeming Waiver



Join us as Clarissa Blanco and Irma Infinger, Regional

Parent to Parent of Georgia logo

Coordinators at P2PGA, explain about Medicaid programs, services and how to qualify. The webinar will include detailed information about both the Katie Beckett Deeming Waiver, how to apply, eligibility requirements, tips on the application process and information on appealing denials.

Date: Tuesday, Mar 29, 2022 at 12:00 PM

Georgia Medicaid Basics and Katie Beckett Deeming Waiver Registration Link

“A leader’s job is to look into the future and see the organization, not as it is, but as it should be.”
(M. Anderson)

A leader’s job is to look into the future and see the organization, not as it is, but as it should be.

MTSS Snapshot: The Role of Leadership for MTSS Implementation

Infrastructure is an essential component of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Included in this component are Leadership, Effective Teaming, Professional Learning, and Parent and Family Engagement. Effective and supportive leadership when implementing MTSS

is not only essential but also critical to ensuring success. Decisions and actions by school and district leaders should proactively support the essential components of MTSS which will ensure the framework implementation is far more effective. Furthermore, strong leadership will assist in ensuring that district and school infrastructure, resources, and processes are aligned to make certain that the needs of all students are met through use of the framework.

When thinking about leadership in a school, it does not all rest at the administrators’ feet. Leadership must be shared and cascaded throughout the school when implementing a system or framework as comprehensive as MTSS. From the administrative team to the school/building leadership team and beyond, it is important that the messaging is consistent and clear. Leaders should consider the following as implementation begins:

- Cast a clear vision for all stakeholders and place importance on MTSS as a priority.
- Develop a positive school culture built around MTSS practices.
- Focus on Tier I instruction with a viable curriculum, evidence-based practices, high leverage practices, and differentiation for learners.
- Ensure on-going, job embedded professional learning is targeted at fidelity of implementation and designed to meet the needs of the teachers.
- Attend to shared leadership, effective teaming, professional learning, and

parent and family engagement throughout the school year to prevent and address barriers to implementation.

- Identify and remove barriers to fidelity of implementation.

There are several elements to the role of effective leaders when implementing MTSS. The website for **Georgia's Tiered System of Supports** includes many resources that may help guide the work toward fidelity. Included on the website is a *Fact Sheet about Leadership* for MTSS. Also, consider the *Fidelity of Implementation Rubrics (District and School levels)* whether the implementation is new or has been in progress. The rubric(s) will assist in developing next steps for your work. For additional information, feel free to reach out to the MTSS regional coaches or Karen Suddeth, ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us to learn more.

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