

School Improvement and Equity

Stephanie Johnson, Deputy Superintendent

Welcome to the fall of school year 2020-2021 as we reimagine education during COVID-19 and beyond! Local school districts and our state agency were charged with immense and urgent tasks of planning, launching, and sustaining a successful school year for staff and students in the wake of COVID-19. Despite changes and unknown circumstances, our Georgia teachers, leaders, support staff, parents, and students are to be commended for the high level of resiliency and commitment displayed during the restart of school this fall. As the year progresses, our staff is committed to serving and supporting each district as they strive for equity, are mindful of health and safety, and focus on teaching and learning to improve outcomes for all students.

While school may look different this fall than what educators and students are accustomed to, our focus remains the same: Every student receives a high-quality education. This is true whether students learn remotely, in person, or through a hybrid of the two. We realize there are no single solutions or one-size-fits-all strategies. In fact, school districts in Georgia are structured and function in significantly different ways across our state. However, the goals of focusing on educational equity and meeting the needs of the whole child unify the statewide mission of increasing outcomes for all students. This means every student has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment and time in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or family income.

Reaching educational equity begins with reflection:

- How do we shift our practices to become forward-thinking in the use of data, accountability metrics, planning, and funding in support of the whole child?
- What is our current reality, and what is our desired state?
- Who is involved in our work?
- Who should be involved in our work?
- How can we maximize our resources to better support our staff and students?
- What do our schools need to be successful?
- How is my leadership helping?

The purpose of this newsletter is to help educators across Georgia work with and leverage evidence-based resources and support available through GaDOE and our partners to increase capacity, build coherence, and advance equity. The articles present relevant information about opportunities to improve school and district effectiveness and links to resources addressing wraparound support, instructional practice, and leadership. This includes examples of promising practices Georgia districts are currently employing to provide the greatest level of support for students and staff. Please enjoy the newsletter and remember to check our website for the [professional development calendar](#), [evidence-based resources](#), and the archive of presentations from our [instructional leadership and conferences](#).

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Leading Improvement with Data

North Area News

Martha Jo Johnson, Interim Program Manager



From left, Crystal Moseley, Instructional Coach; Eric Alston, Assistant Principal; Dr. Marci Vining, Principal; Tykaunda Colton, Counselor

Dr. Marci Vining, principal of Unity Elementary School in Meriwether County, shared that she currently has about 40 percent of students participating in remote learning. When Dr. Vining began setting achievement goals for 2021, she and her team knew the most recent data available was from Renaissance Learning (STAR) in early March. To meet this challenge, the district and school decided to use the same platform to assess students in early September just after the school opened. Remote students received access codes for participating at home. This allowed the school to gather baseline data to set goals for students. Dr. Vining's team also used historical data available in SLDS to understand learning trends over time and set goals for the 2020-2021 school year. Even with the challenges of remote learning, the Unity team focuses on moving forward and setting SMART goals.

The Unity team is committed to providing staff with clear goals for student achievement using relevant data. The team also drafted updated pacing guides using domain weights from the Georgia Milestones assessment system to focus on priority standards. With support from the GaDOE Office of School Improvement and West Georgia RESA, they are currently building their instructional plan and focusing professional learning to support evidence-based instructional practices. As such, the Unity team set a mission to meet students where they are and engage staff in ongoing data-driven instructional practices.

Rethinking School: Impacts of Virtual Learning

Metro Area News

Susan Patrick, Program Manager

Since the onset of the Covid-19 crisis in March 2020 schools have shifted the delivery of learning for students. This shift has caused educators to rethink the traditional classroom, especially in terms of a new online virtual setting, and specifically how that impacts students and teachers--learning and teaching. Districts in the Atlanta area are providing professional development to the metro teaching force in preparation of digital lessons.

While the shift to virtual learning may be new for many teachers, it is especially new for administrators who must now shift in the performance of traditional tasks such as observing classrooms and offering meaningful feedback to teachers. Similarly, teachers and students traded brick-and-mortar classrooms for the virtual space in the delivery of instruction, while striving to maintain a not-so-easy "engagement" in student learning.

High school teachers especially used digital platforms to deliver whole as well as small group instruction. Digital tools allowed teachers to group students in "break-out rooms" to provide needed additional support with the teacher, while classmates continued a synchronous lesson. School administrators observed virtual classes to determine what was working and what supports were needed to help teachers shift to a new mode of instruction.

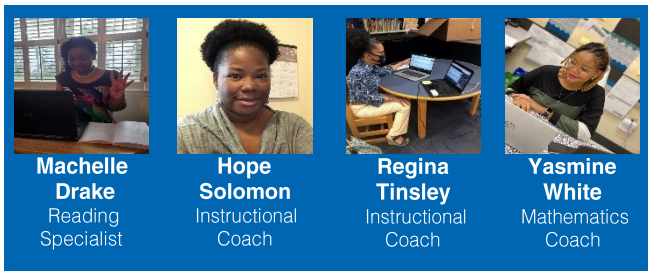
One aspect of observing virtual classrooms during this digital period was "student engagement," or the lack of meaningful interaction throughout class time. Some administrators noticed that students preferred using the "chat" box compared to using their voices to answer questions or in offering comments during class. Teachers are discovering innovative ways to maximize student learning tools, engaging students with content and classmates, exponentially increasing student attendance, and ultimately making class "edutainable!"

Reimagining Professional Learning During COVID-19 and Beyond

SIG 1003(g), Cohort 5

Patricia Rooks, Program Manager

Whether restart was to be virtual, face-to-face or a hybrid model, the SIG 1003(g) schools worked tirelessly over the summer to prepare for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. An example of the good work is the development and implementation of the SIG Saturday/after-school professional learning plan at Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School in Dougherty County. The reading specialist, Machelle Drake, mathematics coach, Yasmine White, and instructional coaches, Hope Solomon and Regina Tinsley, under the leadership of the principal, Mrs. Harvey, developed and delivered job-embedded professional learning tailored to the needs of the staff.



To date, the coaches facilitated over 30 hours of professional learning, including Google Classroom, Keenville, GKIDS, Gradual Release, Achievement Level Descriptors, Units of Study, 5 E's, and Eureka modules. They modeled the use of brain-break activities, breakout sessions, teaming, and collaboration for teachers to emulate during their virtual instruction. To support transfer, the coaches assisted teachers with staging classrooms for real-time teaching, assisted with lesson plans for asynchronous and synchronous instruction, vetted instructional videos, and supported the development of Bitmoji classrooms. It is exciting to see the school leaders, coaches, and instructional staff dedicated to targeted professional learning as they strive for the highest level of success for all students in the virtual learning environment and beyond!

Visit www.gadoe.org/SIG for more information.

Redefining Instruction

South Area News

Janie Fields, Program Manager

During this global pandemic, educators are redefining how they provide quality instruction to students. The teachers who provide instruction in both the traditional and the new virtual format must “brush up” on skills needed to provide high quality, engaging instruction. Furthermore, teachers must learn the skills to facilitate virtual instruction. Considering online learning requires new skills, several South Area team members provided professional learning (PL) for teachers to enhance and build the skillsets for engaging, effective instruction, in both traditional and virtual settings. Gladys Fisher, GaDOE School Effectiveness Specialist (SES), provided *Strengthening Evidence-based Instructional Practices* and the *Collaborative Planning Process* PL—critical skillsets for teachers to plan for instruction in the new formats. Collaborative planning helps teachers talk through common challenges and collectively come up with strategies to address these concerns in providing traditional and remote instruction.

Dr. Rena Beasley, SES, assisted with writing the Remote Learning Handbook, which guides effective virtual teaching. Furthermore, Dr. Rebecca Gillette, SES, and Dr. Beasley provided PL on better utilizing data analysis tools to support our schools and districts. Their session was presented at the Fall Instructional Leadership Conference to enhance school and district staffs' data analysis skills. In addition to participating in ongoing PL, many South Area districts conduct virtual assessments to determine students' academic levels following a school year with no state testing, the usual vehicle for assessment data. These virtual assessments help schools and districts plan for teaching and learning, which must occur to get students to grade-level performance.

“During this global pandemic, educators are redefining how they provide quality instruction to students.”

2020 Fall Virtual Instructional Leadership Conference

Atlanta Office News

Amy Alderman, Program Manager

The [2020 Fall Virtual Instructional Leadership Conference](#) provided professional learning to Georgia Educators on October 6-7, 2020. State School Superintendent Richard Woods set the tone for the 2020-2021 school year by advocating for "compassion over compliance" and giving a charge:

- Focus on students' safety, mental health and wellness before data points and metrics
- Do not focus on test prepping or cramming – remember that every student and every teacher is more than a test score
- Every child in Georgia has experienced unprecedented isolation – many have experienced isolation and loss. Let's enter the gap for these children and provide a nurturing, positive, safe environment where they can learn and grow.

Matt Jones, Chief of Staff, inspired educators to transition from restarting schools to reimagining the "(im)possible." Dr. Stephanie Johnson, Office of School Improvement Deputy Superintendent, concluded by encouraging leaders to utilize forward-thinking to support the whole child and advance equity.

During the two-day event, participants received new and practical resources and available assistance from divisions across the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and partnering agencies to support district and school effectiveness and improvement efforts.

From the Office of School Improvement and all divisions at the Georgia Department of Education, we say thank you for allowing us to share resources and support each of you as you continue to provide high-quality education for the whole child during COVID-19 and beyond!

 **4,000+** ATTENDEES

Title I School Improvement Grants

Atlanta Office News

Gary C. Wenzel, Ph.D., Operations Support Specialist

- The FY20 Title I-A School Improvement grant accounts will remain open by GaDOE Grants Accounting until September 30, 2021, thus there is no need for district completion reports for October 2020 since the completion reports are now due at the end of October 2021.
- The Title I-A School Improvement Grant Process continues by districts making amendments to the FY20 budgets and spending this funding first; and, facilitating collaboration between district personnel and school leaders, and principals and school leadership teams in creating the FY21 budget and Justification of Expenses.

Please consult the Title I, Part A, Section 1003(a) School Improvement Grants Funding Guidelines found on the [SDE process guide webpage](#).

- Districts may want to consider joining Consolidation of Funds with the new Cohort 6 group.

Please contact:

Carly Ambler at 404-623-9599 or cambler@doe.k12.ga.us, or
Kathleen Yarbrough at 678-378-9972 or kathleen.yarbrough@doe.k12.ga.us.

Cohort 6 is now open to receive districts interested in taking advantage of funding flexibility, and the technical assistance provided by the GaDOE Consolidation of Funds staff.

FY21 School Improvement Funding Guidelines

[FY21 School Improvement Funding Guidelines](#)
[School Improvement Funding Presentation](#)
[FY21 Justification of Expenses Worksheet](#)

What's New?

Alternative/Non-Traditional Education News

Samuel Taylor, Program Manager

Members of the Alternative Education Team, in partnership with CTAE Resource Network and the National Association of Alternative Education, sponsored a series of virtual workshops on “How to Become A Community Engagement Expert.” The workshop series was structured over a period of two months, with a total of four two-hour sessions. The series centered on how to create, maximize, and maintain shared partnerships with businesses and industries in local communities. Participants in this training were presented with a wide variety of support and practical techniques they could use immediately. Additionally, participants received a solid understanding of how the principles of science are the foundation for understanding engagement and growing and sustaining partnerships. One of the highlights from this series was the presenter contacting prospective partners and sharing those experiences with the participants. The presenter also had participants contact businesses in their community and share their experiences with the group. The workshops were very engaging and offered participants some great tips on how to engage community businesses and organizations in providing non-academic support for students and school districts.

Visit www.gadoe.org/alternative for more information.

Monthly Highlight

Assessment Specialist News

Georgia School Assessment of Performance on Systems (GSAPS)

With so many schools delivering virtual instruction, having effective practices in place to formatively assess student learning is even more paramount for schools and districts. The Area Program Assessment Specialist (APAS) team presented practices, tools, and resources during the 2020 Fall Virtual Instructional Leadership Conference around virtual data and assessment literacy.

The APAS team appreciates everyone's efforts to provide information around what assessment tools federally identified schools and districts are currently using. We hope to complete collecting all the needed information and share it back out with everyone soon.

As always, our team is here to support you as you serve the schools. Please reach out to us for assistance. We are here for you!

SAVE
the
DATE

2021 Winter Instructional
Leadership Conference (ILC)

March 2-3, 2021

Visit www.gadoe.org/sdevents.
More information is coming soon.

Virtual Professional Learning

Formative Instructional Practices (FIP) Professional Learning Series for Federally Identified Schools

Session 1: [How Federally Designated Schools Can Improve](#)

Session 2: [Using GA FIP Web Page Resources to Support Improvement Planning](#)

Session 3: [Using FIP Courses to Design Better Classroom-based Formative Assessments](#)

Session 4: [Creating Optimal Opportunities to Lead FIP Professional Learning](#)

Session 5: [Leading Teachers to Help Students Revise their Thinking Using Formative Assessment](#)

Coming soon!

Session 6: Organizing to Help Teachers Facilitate Student Ownership of Learning

Visit www.gadoe.org/sdeevents for more information.

Visit [Georgia FIP webpage](#) for additional resources.

Visit the following webpages for more information on school improvement programs and events.

[School and District Effectiveness \(SDE\)](#)

[SDE Professional Learning](#)

“Professional Learning is the means by which teachers, administrators, and other staff acquire, enhance, and refine the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions necessary to create and support high levels of learning for all students.”



@GADOESDE

2020 Fall Virtual Instructional Leadership Conference (ILC)

October 6-7, 2020

Presentations, handouts, and on-demand recordings are now available at www.gadoe.org/SDEevents.

A list of the presentations are as follows:

- *PLENARY*: Reimagining Education During COVID-19 and Beyond
- 508 Compliance and Accessibility
- Addressing Student Attendance Through the PBIS Framework
- All Aboard the Social Studies Leader-Ship: Staying Afloat Even in a Pandemic
- Assistive Technology (AT) and AT Resources Available for All Students with Disabilities at No Cost to Districts
- Closing (Instructional) Gaps by Opening (Restorative) Spaces: A BOLD Shift in Practice and Protocols
- Communicating with Parents and Families in a Virtual World
- Data Literacy and Assessment Resources
- Effective Instructional Strategies for Teaching Mathematics
- Evidence, Look Fors, & Affirmation: A Practical Guide to Observations and Feedback in the ELA Classroom
- How to Provide Support in a Virtual Environment: Virtual PLCs and Remote Learning
- It's Time to Add Computer Science
- Learning School English in a Virtual-Distance-Remote Environment
- MTSS Maximizing Instructional Supports for Students in a Virtual and/or Face-to-Face Environment
- Need to Move Instruction Forward? Use FIP
- Observing and Coaching Teachers During Remote Learning: A Focus on TAPS Standards 3 & 4
- Resources and Guidelines for Successful Online Education
- Selecting and Evaluating Evidence-Based Interventions
- Set Sail with Science
- Supporting Teachers with an Effective Data Analysis Model
- The Georgia Home Classroom
- Whole Child Instructional Supports in Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education, and World Languages