



## **DIVISIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES and SUPPORTS**

### **MARCH 2010 DL UPDATE**

#### **Organizational Changes at the Georgia Department of Education:**

Dr. Garry McGiboney has been named to serve as the Associate Superintendent for Policy at the GaDOE. Previously, he served as the Associate Superintendent for Innovative Instruction which included the Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports. This new assignment moves him from direct and daily interaction with special education, but places someone with deep knowledge of special education in the policy section of the department. We appreciate the leadership that he has provided to us and we look forward to working with him in a new capacity

Nancy O'Hara has been named the *Interim* Associate Superintendent for Innovative Instruction. In her new role, Nancy will continue to provide strong support for our special education programs, and she will assume responsibility for several new programs. We want to take this opportunity to thank Nancy for her exemplary leadership in special education over the past thirty years. She has been actively involved in the development of major statewide initiatives and processes including community-based instruction, transition, focused monitoring, and assessment for students with disabilities. We look forward to our continued collaboration with Nancy in her new position.

Deborah Gay has agreed to serve as the *Interim* Director for Special Education Services. Debbie's experience, wisdom and knowledge will provide excellent leadership to the state. Debbie and Kim Hartsell will work together to continue the leadership for special education in Georgia.

#### **Spring Special Education Leadership Meeting Reminder:**

If you have not registered for the Spring Leadership Meeting, we would encourage you to do so as soon as possible. Late registrations are being accepted until March 12, 2010 at which time all registrations will close. Please visit the GAEL website at [www.gael.org](http://www.gael.org) for additional information about the meeting.

Meeting session handouts and local district session assignments will be available on the GaDOE website by March 15, 2010- please print these documents and bring them to the March meeting. Paper handouts will not be provided on-site. Session handouts will also be available for download onto a flash drive in the meeting registration area.

Please bring a **laptop** computer if you are attending the budget and data sessions. Also bring a **flash drive** to download additional documents.

Also, please remember to bring 5 of your **Transition Plans** to work with during your Transition Workshop at the Spring Leadership meeting. This workshop is scheduled for Tuesday (March 23, 2010).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Data Available:**

The GaDOE has recently completed an analysis of the December 2009 FTE Count. The following chart provides the most recent count of special education students in Georgia based on this count. A PDF, entitled “IDEA Data – Age, Gender, Race-Ethnicity Breakouts”, is provided with this update to provide you with additional information. When reviewing this data, it is important to remember that students are counted by primary disability area.

FY2010 State Level Special Education Composition:

Year	ID	ED	SLD	Sp/L	VI/B	HI	D/B	OI	OHI	Autism	TBI	SDD
2009 6-21	18,878	17,172	51,937	25,345	705	1682	25	929	25,246	9,562	440	8,658
2009-3--5	231	72	55	6,311	60	173	5	64	265	775	13	8,467
	10.79%	9.74%	29.36%	17.88%	0.43%	1.05%	0.02%	0.56%	14.41%	5.84%	0.26%	9.67%

A review of the data indicates the following;

- The percentage of children age 3-5 reported under the Office of Special Education Disability Category of MR in the race/ethnicity subgroup of Black increased by 9.62% or 40 children.
- The percentage of children age 6 -21 reported under the Office of Special Education Disability Category of MR decreased by 6.77% or 1,370 children.
- The percentage of children age 6 -21 reported under the Office of Special Education Disability Category of Emotional Disturbance decreased by 9.08% or 1,715 children.
- The percentage of children age 6 -21 reported under the Office of Special Education Disability Category of Autism increased by 9.35% or 818 children.
- The percentage of children age 3-5 increased by 1.92% or 310 children.
- The percentage of children age 6-21 decreased by 1.77% or 2,895.
- The overall percentage children served in special education decreased by 1.44% or 2,585 children.

**March Dispute Resolution – Tip of the Month:**

Recently we have received some formal complaints at the GaDOE related to Child Find procedures. The IDEA regulations (34 CFR § 300.111) and the State Board Rule 160-4-7-.03 (Child Find Procedures) are clear and state that “Each LEA must have in effect policies and procedures to ensure that all suspected children with disabilities, including those who are homeless, are wards of the State or are attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located and evaluated.” You may want to consider a review of your procedures to ensure they include the following:

- Annual notice designed to identify, locate or evaluate must be published or announced in media

- Policies and procedures shall provide for the screening and evaluation of all children with suspected disabilities birth through 21 to include:
  - LEA may fulfill birth to 3 through referral to Babies Can't Wait
  - Preschool children 3-5, not eligible for kindergarten
  - Children enrolled in LEA public charter schools
  - Migrant children
  - Children in city/ county jails or correctional facilities
  - Children in home school / study programs
  - All school children placed by their parents in private day schools in the LEA's jurisdiction
  
- It is important to ensure that parents are made aware of their rights under the IDEA for identification and evaluation when children are a part of these identified groups. Remember that the parent of a child with a suspected disability in the circumstances listed above retains the right to request an evaluation. Each LEA must develop a practical method to determine which children are currently receiving special education and related services. In addition, local data collection procedures must be in place to transmit in electronic format the data on all children who have been found eligible for special education and related services in the December 1 count. These children are counted in the proportionate share calculation. It is suggested that annual meetings for private schools and home school parents are conducted each year prior to July and information regarding decisions regarding proportionate share are made prior to the start of school.

**ExPreSS Programs (Exam Preparation for Science and Social Studies) Update:**

The ExPreSS Program is currently available on-line and face-to-face support will be available in June. Below is information for both ExPreSS Program opportunities.

***Online ExPreSS Tutorial Program***

The Online ExPreSS Tutorial Program is a great opportunity in which students can now participate to support their learning and understanding of Science and Social Studies content in order to prepare for the upcoming administration of these sections of the GHS GT.

Online ExPreSS provides some features that teachers, parents and students may find beneficial:

- It is open to students who have been unsuccessful in passing the Science and/or Social Studies GHS GT as well as to students who have not yet taken those tests. Therefore, students who wish to have additional tutoring or, based upon formative assessment in the subject areas, who may struggle to pass the test can be encouraged to participate before their first administration.
- Students can register to participate in one or both content area tutorials.
- The sessions are self-paced and based upon the instructional plans created for the summer ExPreSS Program. Therefore, the content based upon the information that would be provided in the summer is presented in a format that allows student to learn and relearn at their own speed. Further, the program is available 24/7, giving access in the evenings and on weekends.

These features can help make the Online ExPreSS Tutorial Program an excellent choice for students with and without disabilities who participate in Saturday Schools, “double-dosing”, or who need additional exposure and practice with science and social studies concepts.

The Online ExPreSS Tutorial Program is currently available. Students will create their own registration account using the GTID (Georgia Testing Identifier) number. Detailed instructions for locating the GTID number and creating this account, as well as other information about the program, can be found by accessing the link:

<https://www.georgiastandards.org/Resources/Pages/Tools/ExPreSS.aspx>

To assist with dissemination of information to students, parents and teachers, a flyer is included with this DL Update. For additional information about the Online ExPreSS Tutorial Program, please contact Pat Blenke at [ablenke@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:ablenke@doe.k12.ga.us) or 404.463-1765.

### ***Summer face-to-face ExPreSS Program***

In June, the two-week face-to-face summer ExPreSS Program will be available to students who have taken the Science and/or Social Studies Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT), but did not pass one or both sections. That will be a great opportunity for intensive, targeted support for these students.

There will be over 30 sites around the state, at least two in each RESA district, available to students. Specific details for registering students for the summer 2010 ExPreSS Program will be coming soon.

When registering students, it will be important to ensure the following:

- There is communication between the person registering the student, the student and, for students under the age of 18, the parent. Students and their parents need to know that they have been registered and understand their obligation for attendance and testing.
- The accommodation needs of students with disabilities or are ELLs are available and can be verified by the registrar. This may mean having access to the IEP or IAP for students with disabilities (special education or 504) or the TCP Plan for students who receiving ESOL services. The ExPreSS Student Application form will allow for both instructional and assessment accommodations to be entered, and complete information is necessary to ensure that the needs of each individual student are met.
- Complete information about the home school and system is provided. While preparing for the implementation of the summer ExPreSS Program, it may be necessary to contact those in the system familiar with the student to discuss accommodations. In addition, this information will help ensure that test results are returned to the student/school/system in a timely manner.

Both ExPreSS Programs provide exciting opportunities for students who have or are struggling with the Science and Social Studies content in high school. The outcomes for the ExPreSS Program in 2009 were very promising. We continue to work to ensure that our students, with and without disabilities, have every opportunity to grasp information then show what they know and can do on assessments, leading to more students receiving a general education diploma and developing positive post-school outcomes.

### **Georgia Vision Educator's Weekend with the Experts**

The 2010 Vision Educator's Statewide Training (GVEST) will be offering weekend with the experts trainings in March, April and May of 2010. These trainings will be offered in Macon at the Georgia Academy for the Blind. An informational flyer and a registration form is attached to this update.

### **State Board of Education Recognition Awards of Excellence:**

The State Board of Education recognizes groups of outstanding students in various subject areas of achievement. The 2010 Awards of Excellence Recognition Program for Exceptional Students will be held in Atlanta on June 10, 2010 at 9:30 am, during the State Board of Education Meeting at the Department of Education in the 20th floor Board Room of Twin Towers East. Your agency will receive final details of the award recipients and this activity.

This year the Divisions for Special Education are seeking to recognize High School Seniors with Disabilities who have had academic and/or extracurricular accomplishments, as shown by:

1. Earning a scholarship to a four-year, two-year, or vocational technical school;
2. Earning a Regular Education Diploma with outstanding extracurricular involvement in school/community;
3. Earning a Special Education Diploma with transition to career education and/or employment.

Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) centers and local school systems within your area are invited to nominate qualifying students for this year's recognition awards. The Awards Recognition application will soon be available on our website at [www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org) on the Special Education home page, and is also attached to this update. Please complete the form for each student nominated, and return by **March 16, 2010**, to the address below:

Frank Nesbit  
Division for Exceptional Students  
1870 Twin Towers East  
Atlanta, GA 30334  
PHONE: 404-844-8741  
FAX: 404-651-6457  
[fnesbit@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:fnesbit@doe.k12.ga.us)

**Only applications submitted by GLRS directors or  
Special Education Directors to the DOE will be accepted.**

### **Georgia Instructional Materials Center Update:**

The following information is provided to assist school districts in obtaining accessible instructional materials (AIMs) for students who are blind or other print disabled.

- Student registration is now available through the on-line book ordering database. All new students must be registered using the online form. During registration, systems make the distinction between students who are legally blind and all others who have a print related disability documented in their current IEPs. The student's Georgia Testing ID is required for registration. The online form makes registration a quick and easy process. Paper registration forms are no longer being accepted.
- School systems must designate system contact persons. The Special Education Director and their designees are the only persons authorized to register students and order student materials.
- Electronic book files have been available through the GIMC during the 2009-10 school year. The electronic book files can be used on both computer and portable devices that accept PDF files.

Universal Reader Pro has been provided to students who do not already have access to software that provides text to speech reading support.

- New book order deadlines have been established for all future book orders. Order AIMs prior to the date the student requires them as indicated below:
  - Braille: 12 weeks prior\*
  - Large Print: 8 weeks prior
  - Digital formats 6 weeks prior

*\*Braille requests for new adoptions and other books that will have to be transcribed must be placed at least **16 weeks** prior to the date the student requires them.*

- Consult the GIMC website at [www.gimc.org](http://www.gimc.org) for more information about these items and for additional information about Accessible Instructional Materials. Look for the GIMC Poster session and conference session related to Accessible Instructional Materials for students with print disabilities at the upcoming Spring Leadership Conference in Athens.

### **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Family Engagement:**

The Georgia Hands & Voices Meeting will be held on March 20, 2010 at the Athens Regional Library in Athens from 1 p.m. till 4 p.m.

What: Hands & Voices Georgia, a state chapter for the national organization providing advocacy and support to families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology, is hosting its first Athens, Ga. event to introduce resources and opportunities to families and professionals in the region.

Where: Athens Regional Library on Baxter Street in Athens  
2025 Baxter Street · Athens, Georgia 30606  
(706) 613-3650

Who: Families, professionals and adults who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing who communicate manually and/or orally. From American Sign Language to cochlear implants, our organization represents people from all different approaches to, and experiences with, deafness or hearing loss. Anyone who is supportive, educated, motivated and dedicated to improving communication access, and improving the social and educational outcomes for our children allowing them to reach their highest potential.

How: Childcare will be provided and Interpreters will be available. **Please RSVP to [Info@gahandsandvoices.org](mailto:Info@gahandsandvoices.org) by March 17** so that we can ensure we have adequate and appropriate childcare and seating. RSVPs should include how many we can expect (adults and children) and if an interpreter is needed.

The Mission of GA Hands & Voices: GA Hands and Voices is dedicated to supporting families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology. They are a statewide parent-driven, non-profit organization providing families with the resources, networks, and information they need to improve communication access and educational outcomes for their children. Their outreach activities, parent/professional collaboration, and advocacy efforts are focused on enabling Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children to reach their highest potential.

For any questions please contact: Terri Patterson at [terri@gahandsandvoices.org](mailto:terri@gahandsandvoices.org) -or- Frank Nesbit at [fnesbit@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:fnesbit@doe.k12.ga.us). Please visit their website at [www.gahandsandvoices.org](http://www.gahandsandvoices.org)

## **Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership News!**

There is truly strength in numbers and the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership (PMP) is growing even stronger for the 2009-2010 school year. With the addition of 13 new counties, there are currently 90 parent mentors in the PMP from diverse regions of the state. We would like to welcome the new mentors and systems:

### **Northwest**

Linda Young                      Trion City

### **Northeast**

Teresa Bruce                      Franklin County  
Amy McCollum                      Oconee County  
Heloise Salter                      Columbia County

### **Metro**

Rose Calloway                      Atlanta Public Schools  
Renee Davis                      Douglas County  
Zoila Martinez                      Fulton County (focusing on Hispanic Family Engagement)  
Nancy Grabe                      Marietta City Schools

### **Middle**

James Butler                      Lamar County  
Taimie Hoffman                      Thomaston/Upson

### **Southwest**

Janie Kelley                      Decatur County

### **Southeast**

Cynthia Criss                      Pulaski County  
Becky Fields                      Effingham County  
Patti Oglesby                      Emanuel County  
Kim Gibson                      Ware County

The new mentors will add their knowledge and experience as parents of children with disabilities with advocacy and prior work experience to the PMP. Under the leadership of the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership Council, regional trainers are assisting first-year mentors with learning the nuts and bolts of how to be a parent mentor; how to collect and maintain data on parent involvement, how to share resources, and how to train educators, parents and the community about education and disability issues.

### **New Mentors for FY11:**

The GaDOE is proud to fund the Parent Mentor Partnership again in the 2010-2011 school year. Information on becoming part of next year's rookie class will be available later this month through your District Liaison. Commitment letters signed by local system superintendents and the special education director are due back to the GaDOE by April 15, 2010. New systems, as well as returning systems, must complete the commitment memorandum.

### **Newly Revised GaPMP Website:**

The Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership website is in the final stages of being updated! This newly revised site is divided into Family, School and Community. Check us out when we launch later this month! [www.parentmentors.org](http://www.parentmentors.org)

### **GaPMP's Second Addition of their Toolkit is Online!:**

The second addition of the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership Toolkit, "Impacting Education with Family Engagement Strategies" describes family engagement supports, trainings, resources and collaborative initiatives led by parents and educators who are positively impacting results for Georgia students. This

toolkit was funded by the Southeast Regional Resource Center. You can view the first "Toolkit" and this second addition by going to our website [www.parentmentors.org](http://www.parentmentors.org) or [www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org) (Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports).

### **OT/PT Educationally Relevant Therapy Workgroup Update:**

The first meeting of the OT/PT Educationally Relevant Therapy Workgroup took place on January 25, 2010 at the Twin Towers in Atlanta. The eleven member team includes occupational and physical therapists and two administrators. The group reviewed guidance developed by other states and discussed the needs of Georgia schools districts. They have begun drafting written guidance that distinguishes the differences between educationally relevant therapy and the medical model of therapy. In addition, they have begun to review a tool to assist IEP teams in the decision process for determining amounts of time and delivery models for therapy services. The draft document and tool will be presented to special education directors for feedback during the March Spring Leadership Meeting in Athens. Statewide feedback will be requested in April following the incorporation of feedback from the special education directors. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document addressing other pertinent issues in school-based occupational and physical therapy will also be ready for dissemination at that time. If you have any questions concerning the work group or the provision of school-based occupational and physical therapy in Georgia, please contact Elise Lynch at [elynch@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:elynch@doe.k12.ga.us) or at (404) 844-7637.

### **Georgia Aquarium Announces Summer Camp for Students with Disabilities**

For summer 2010, the Georgia Aquarium is pleased to announce that it is offering a camp program for children with special needs ages 5-8 who have been diagnosed with either high functioning autism or with mild learning disabilities. This is a week-long camp which will run from June 7-11, 2010. A letter with further information entitled "Georgia Aquarium Summer Camp" is provided with this update.

### **Dates to Remember**

#### **March**

- 3** Grant for Residential and Reintegration Services (GRRS) - applications due
- 6-7** Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment, Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, Clarkston
- 19** Georgia Deaf Education Assistants and Special Education Technology Centers ~~Cancelled~~
- 20** Georgia Hands & Voices Meeting, Athens Regional Library, Athens
- 22** Special Education Leadership Development Academy (GCASE/GaDOE), site TBA
- 22-24** Spring Special Education Leadership Meeting, Classic Center, Athens

#### **April**

- 1** Grant for High Cost Fund (GHCF) - applications due
- 22** Special Education Directors' Discussion Forum  
Location: Bibb County, Career Center Annex at Hutchings



**May**

**7** Georgia Vision Impaired Consortia Meeting, Host Site: Pioneer RESA ETC

**10** Special Education Directors' Elluminate Session

**15-16** Educational Interpreter Performance Assessments, Largo Tibet Elementary School, Savannah

**June**

**7-11** Georgia Aquarium Summer Camp

**9-10-11** Educational Interpreters Performance Assessment, Valdosta State University, Valdosta

**10** State Board of Education Recognition Awards of Excellence, Department of Education, Atlanta