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**DIVISIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES and SUPPORTS**

**OCTOBER 2009 DL UPDATE**

**Welcome**

The Division for Special Education Supports is pleased to welcome Dr. Mike Blake as the new program specialist for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. In this capacity, Mike will also serve as the program specialist for the Georgia Network for Emotional and Behavioral Support (GNETS). Mike is joining the GaDOE after a 25 year career in the Clarke County School District where he served as a special education teacher, coordinator, director, and Assistant Superintendent of Student Services overseeing special education, psychology, social work, nursing, and hospital/homebound programs. Mike's background also includes serving as an Associate Professor of Special Education at Piedmont College specializing in functional behavioral analysis and policy and legal issues in special education. He has served on the GaDOE team for state transition planning and as an advisor for the Parent Mentor Partnership. Mike's email address is [mblake@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:mblake@doe.k12.ga.us).

**Georgia's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process: Timeline Verification, Record Review Follow-Up, and Record Reviews**

**Timeline Verifications**

Systems have been randomly selected and already notified if they are required to submit their supporting documentation (logs and/or other information) from FY09 for initial referrals, re-determinations, and Babies Can't Wait. The information is due to Kathy Giddens at [kgiddens@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:kgiddens@doe.k12.ga.us) by October 19.

**Record Review Follow-Ups**

Systems who had a Record Review in FY09 and were not in compliance at that time will be receiving a Record Review Follow-Up prior to the anniversary date of their Record Review. Records will be reviewed as a desk audit. You will be asked to submit records based on the original findings. At a minimum, systems will submit copies of IEPs. Eligibilities will be requested if related findings were noted in the original Record Review Report. You will be contacted by Kathy Giddens when it is time to submit your documentation.

## **Record Reviews**

Schedules have been set for systems receiving a Record Review for the FY10 year. Systems will be notified approximately one month prior to the review. Most reviews will be completed on site during a one day visit with the District Liaison and the Record Review Specialist.

## **Autism Regional Team Meetings:**

Thank you for helping to make our First Annual Autism Academy in Perry this summer a huge success. We trained over 200 teachers during the academy on a series of major topics pertaining to successfully teaching students with autism spectrum disorders. The Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports are conducting Regional Autism Team Meetings this year as a follow-up to our Autism Academy. The regional meetings will be held in four regions in Georgia to include Bibb County, Pickens County, Dougherty County and Liberty County. The regional teams will be conducted as consortia meetings, planned and facilitated by staff from the Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports and will focus on building local capacity for working with students with autism spectrum disorders.

Two meetings are scheduled for the 2009-2010 school year. During these meetings, members will have the opportunity to share concerns and effective strategies with each other as well as staff from the Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports. The local system is responsible for funding and providing a substitute teacher as needed for each of the two, one-day meetings.

The dates and locations for the fall meetings are listed below.

October 1 - Savannah Region - Liberty County Board of Education, 200 Bradville Street, Hinesville, Ga. 31313

October 15 - Albany Region - SW Georgia GLRS, 9155 McKinley Street, Albany, Ga. 31701

October 19 - Pickens Region - Pickens County Board of Education, 159 Stegall Drive, Jasper, Ga. 30143

October 28 - Macon Region -Georgia Academy for the Blind (?), 2260 Vineville Avenue, Macon, Ga. 31204

## **Georgia Vision Educators Statewide Training**

The Georgia Vision Educators Statewide Training will be held October 8-9, 2009 at the Georgia Academy for the Blind in Macon. For information, please contact Kathy Segers at [ksegers@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:ksegers@doe.k12.ga.us).

## **Dispute Resolution Tip - October 2009**

A frequently asked question is, "What are the issues that arise most often in the formal complaint process provided by the GaDOE in accordance with the IDEA procedural safeguards?" As we begin to examine the 2008-2009 dispute resolution data and develop the Annual Performance Report (APR), the issues arising from the formal complaints in 2008-2009 represent a relatively small number of compliance issues. The number of the issues identified in the complaints received last year in which findings were issued is listed below:

- Evaluation Procedures (7)
- IEP Implementation (5)
- Development and Review of the IEP (4)
- Discipline Procedures (4)
- Free Appropriate Public Education (4)
- Progress Reporting of IEP goals (4)
- Parental Participation (2)
- Access Rights (2)
- Extended School Year Services (1)
- Personnel Qualifications (1)
- Continuum/Placement (1)
- Charter School (1)

This information guides the GaDOE in determining areas of technical assistance required for system compliance. In the 2008-2009 school year there were 52 complaints filed. Following the investigation 20 systems were determined to be in compliance, 19 systems had findings issued and 13 complaints were withdrawn by the parties, generally following mediation or an IEP meeting. Think about how your system works to improve compliance with the IDEA requirements represented by the findings. Be proactive and seek assistance if you are struggling with compliance in any of these or other areas of the IDEA requirements.

### **Call for Proposals: SSTAGE's Best Practices Conference**

*Are you ready to showcase your school's or system's effective RTI, POI and SST practices?* The next SSTAGE Best Practice conference will focus on elementary and secondary level schools and system practices. Your completed application will assist the SSTAGE Professional Learning Committee and SSTAGE Board of Directors in selecting outstanding Georgia schools and systems to present at the next conference. Previous applicants and presenters may apply. The conference will be held at The Classic Center in Athens on Wednesday, January 13, 2010. For details and a copy of the application, please refer to the SSTAGE attachment.

### **Is Dyslexia a Specific Learning Disability?**

There has been much confusion concerning the term "dyslexia". We have received a lot of questions and comments from parents who say that the schools do not recognize the diagnosis of "dyslexia". This is an inappropriate response from the school system and is actually contrary to guidance contained in the IDEA 2004. The term "dyslexia" is included in the definition of a specific learning disability refer to 34 CFR §300.8(c)(10).

The definition of dyslexia adopted by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) states: "Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge." According to this definition it is the unexpected difficulties that

students with dyslexia demonstrate despite the provision of research based classroom instruction/intervention. This refers to the student who although provided with reading interventions does not respond to the interventions.

When a parent provides documentation from a private evaluation that gives a diagnosis of "dyslexia" the school/system should respond by reviewing the documentation, meet/conference with the parent(s) to discuss the student's progress in reading, and determine if there is an impact in academics. The student would have to demonstrate they do not make adequate response to core instruction and subsequent supplemental research based interventions don't result in movement towards benchmarks and peer performance levels. However, this is just one piece of the multiple evaluations that need to be collected to determine if a student is a student with a specific learning disability.

It is true that a student can have a diagnosis of dyslexia, but may not meet eligibility for a specific learning disability category. The diagnosis of dyslexia is simply stating a child is exhibiting difficulty in reading. The school/system will need to investigate if the student is experiencing significant learning difficulties that are impacting their ability to progress through the curriculum. Whether the student is identified as a child with a disability eligible for special education or not, the local school still has the responsibility to research and provide effective interventions to address the reading difficulties with interventions and strategies effective with specific reading challenges the student is exhibiting. All schools should have teachers prepared to provide instruction for students with reading difficulties.

### **October is Dyslexia Month**

The DOE will begin a series of ElluminateLive! Sessions in the area of Dyslexia. These sessions are being developed by the Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Supports. Participants will gain an understanding of the term Dyslexia, the core deficits involved in Dyslexia and SLD eligibility in the area of reading, and how to select resources available.

The sessions are scheduled as follows:

October 19th 3pm-4:30 pm

November 9th 3pm-4:30pm

December 14th 3pm-4:30pm

January 11th 3pm-4:30pm

### **ElluminateLIVE! Special Education Professional Learning Series and Provision of PLUs**

To support local school systems in providing training to teachers and administrators on various topics regarding special education, the Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports continue to conduct an ongoing series of on-line learning sessions through ElluminateLIVE!. The sessions are intended to provide current information on the issues that affect students with disabilities and their families. Many systems have developed courses around these sessions and are providing PLUs at the system level. The Elluminate sessions are also being used by systems in order to train new faculty and staff on various topics. The training is divided into sections (e.g., Data collections, transition, co-teaching, Positive Behavior Supports, Compliance,

IEPs, Access to GAA, Academic Performance, Family Engagement, Assistive Technology, etc.); therefore training and/or PLU courses can be designed around many different topics according to faculty and staff needs. *Please remember to share this information with all of your schools.*

This month the following sessions will be live starting at various times (see below); you may join thirty minutes before the sessions begin:

October 8, 2009	3:30 pm	Giving Access to English Language Arts Standards-Listening, Speaking, Viewing, Writing, and Reading for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
October 20, 2009	8:30 am	Intro to Data Warehouse/FTE 2/GNETS File
October 21, 2009	10:00 am	Systems Share: Programs and Interventions that Work
October 22, 2009	3:30 pm	Transition Council Networking-"We Did It"

In order to access these sessions please go to [gadoe.org](http://gadoe.org)>[georgiastandards.org](http://georgiastandards.org)>click on Elluminate Live! Webinars (current) under announcements OR <http://elluminate.gavirtualschool.org/dae/index.html>. Passwords are no longer required.

### **Dates to Remember:**

#### **October**

- 1 Regional Autism Team Meeting, Savannah Region , Liberty County Board of Education, Hinesville
- 14 Special Education Directors' Discussion Forum, 12:30 - 3:30 pm  
Location: Bibb County, Career Center Annex at Hutchings
- 15 Regional Autism Team Meeting, Albany Region, SW Georgia GLRS, Albany
- 19 Regional Autism Team Meeting, Pickens Region, Pickens County Board of Education, Jasper
- 24-25 Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment, Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, Clarkston
- 28 Regional Autism Team Meeting, Macon Region, Macon

#### **November**

- 2-4 GA Assn. of School Psychologists fall conference, Savannah Marriott Riverfront.
- 7-8 Educational Interpreter Performance Assessments, Site TBA
- 9 Special Education Directors' Elluminate Session  
Kim Hartsell and Nancy O'Hara 10:00-11:30 a.m.
- 10-11 State Advisory Panel for Special Education, Savannah

- 11 Special Education Leadership Development Academy (GCASE/GaDOE), Savannah
- 12-13 GCASE Fall Conference, Savannah
- 20 Georgia Deaf Education Achievement Forum (GDEAF), Educational Technology Centers
- January 2010**
- 14 Special Education Directors' Discussion Forum  
Location: Bibb County, Career Center Annex at Hutchings
- 16-17 Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment, Site TBA
- 22 Georgia Deaf Education Achievement Forums (GDEAF), Educational Technology Centers
- 31 Special Education Leadership Development Academy (GCASE/GaDOE), Atlanta
- February**
- 8 Special Education Directors' Elluminate Session  
Kim Hartsell and Nancy O'Hara 10:00-11:30 a.m.
- 19 Georgia Vision Impaired Consortia Meeting  
Host Site: Valdosta State ETC
- March**
- 6-7 Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment, Site TBA
- 19 Georgia Deaf Education Achievement Forums (GDEAF), Educational Technology Centers
- 22 Special Education Leadership Development Academy (GCASE/GaDOE), site TBA
- TBA Spring Special Education Leadership Meeting
- April**
- 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
- June**
- 9-10-11 Educational Interpreters Performance Assessment, Valdosta State University, Valdosta