



Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS)

Strategic Plan

May 6, 2011

Introduction

The Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) is comprised of 24 programs which support local school districts' continuum of services for students with disabilities, ages 3-21. The programs provide comprehensive educational and therapeutic support services to students who might otherwise require residential or other more restrictive placements due to the severity of one or more of the characteristics of the disability category of emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD).

This strategic plan addresses recent audit findings, recommendations from stakeholder meetings, and general improvement strategies the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has been addressing over time with the network. As part of the general improvement strategies, GaDOE has conducted stakeholder meetings with individual groups representing GNETS directors, special education directors, fiscal agents for GNETS, school superintendents and others. Surveys to gather additional information were distributed to local special education directors and fiscal agents. The strategic plan embodies input from these sources and focuses on seven major areas including; (1) program operations (2) accountability, (3) student placement, (4) therapeutic interventions and supports, (5) educational programs, (6) program funding and (7) location of programs and service areas. Workgroups including GNETS staff, GaDOE staff and other relevant stakeholders will oversee the progress towards meeting identified goals and activities in each of these areas. The plan is currently structured around a three year timeline aimed at completing the identified goals by FY15. Year one of the strategic plan focuses on gathering data, evaluation of current resources in all 24 GNETS programs, piloting innovative activities in designated programs and laying a foundation for the work in year two. Year two of the plan will focus on the professional learning required to assist each program to implement the identified core array of services. Additional focus in year two will be the identification of data elements needed to create a funding formula to support core services to local school districts. Year three of the strategic plan will focus on implementation of services designed to meet the needs of the students in the local school district.

A Steering Committee will advise the GaDOE on the implementation of specific strategies, timelines, and accountability for student results outlined in the strategic plan. Representatives from the GaDOE, GNETS director group, RESA directors, superintendents, local district special education directors, parents and partner agencies will be represented on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will meet quarterly in the first year, FY12, to monitor the progress in meeting timelines for designated activities and make adjustments to the strategic plan as recommended by the strategic plan workgroups. The strategic plan is the road map for implementation of the vision for the network.

Vision and Purpose of the Network

GNETS is a network of services provided to local school districts. The vision of State School Superintendent, Dr. John D. Barge, to make education work for all Georgians is the vision of this strategic plan. GNETS is a service and not a place and is designed to be a support program for students to address the interfering emotionally-based behaviors that have disrupted education. The GNETS Program provides an array of therapeutic and behavioral supports as well as specialized instruction for students who exhibit emotional and behavioral disorders. These supports are designed to assist the student to progress in the general curriculum and graduate ready for work or post secondary studies. In addition, the GNETS program provides supports to families and works collaboratively with other agencies serving these students.

The vision and purpose of the GNETS program will be realized through an array of services available to support local school districts in acquiring services and skills directed at maintaining services for students in their local districts. In addition, some services will be provided directly to students and their families in a GNETS program. These indirect and direct services include but are not limited to the following:

- Professional learning to support districts
- Behavioral support consultation
- Social histories / evaluations
- Family support
- Parent training
- Crisis intervention consultation
- Comprehensive transition support for student reintegration to home school
- IEP placement in a GNETS classroom determined at least annually by an IEP Team
- Facilitation for mental health support
- Cooperative agreements with Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) and others

Program Operation

The GaDOE will provide to each GNETS program, GNETS fiscal agent, local school district, and other stakeholders a GNETS program operations manual that clearly describes program responsibilities and fiscal operations. This manual will be designed so GNETS programs operate efficiently, effectively, and consistently throughout the network to support local school districts in providing students with educational opportunities that will enable them to become college and career ready.

Goal 1: The GaDOE will develop, implement, and revise a GNETS program operations manual that will describe efficient, effective, and consistent program management throughout the network.

| Action Step | Resources & Partners | Person Responsible | Timeline (Start/Completion Date) | Data | Status |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| 1. Publish GNETS operations manual on GaDOE web site and other sources. | GaDOE | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 | Manual product | |
| 2. Provide professional learning for the GNETS program operations manual. | GaDOE GNETS Fiscal Agents | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | | |
| 3. Revise and update GNETS operations manual annually. | GaDOE GNETS Fiscal Agents | Workgroup Leader | July 1 annually | User feedback | |

Student Services in GNETS

Most students served by GNETS programs are those with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. Other eligible students with disabilities may be served in GNETS classes when the frequency, intensity and duration of their behaviors is such that this placement is deemed appropriate to meet the students' needs by their Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams. Students who are served in GNETS classes are those requiring the intensive therapeutic interventions and educational support that GNETS programs are designed to provide.

The GaDOE, along with stakeholders, will develop a GNETS Consideration Checklist to assist local IEP teams in making placement decisions. GNETS class placement is generally the most structured, therapeutic and restrictive educational program that school districts can offer along the special education continuum of services, other than residential or home based services.

Students placed in GNETS classes must have exit criteria developed upon entrance. Exit criteria are reconsidered or revised as needed upon review of the student's progress and IEP. The GaDOE provides technical assistance to GNETS programs regarding the development of specific and measurable exit criteria. While the majority of students served by GNETS programs have emotional and behavioral disorders, students with other disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviors may also be served if a GNETS service meets the needs identified by the IEP Team.

The IEP Team may identify that a student requires a service in the identified GNETS array of intensive services including a high staff to student ratio. In order to build capacity to serve students and to offer a full continuum of services, GNETS programs and local school districts will be encouraged to develop collaborative partnerships to adequately fund services for students with very high frequency and intense behaviors. These students may include those with autism and other developmental disabilities. The GaDOE has conducted extensive training and support for local school districts to increase their capacity to serve students with autism. This may result in some GNETS programs serving fewer students with autism in the future. GNETS programs may serve additional students with autism as collaborative, capacity-building partnerships are developed with local school districts.

Goal 2: GNETS placement decisions will be based on data and documentation of student progress in specialized instruction, behavioral interventions and individualized student needs for (a.) initiation of services and (b.) exit from GNETS.

| Action Step | Resources & Partners | Person Responsible | Timeline (Start/Completion Date) | Data | Status |
|---|---|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Develop a GNETS Consideration Guide to inform IEP teams regarding strategies and interventions for students. | GaDOE Special Education Directors GNETS Directors | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | AT Checklist | |
| 2. Provide professional learning on the <u>process</u> of conducting Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavioral intervention plans to assure that positive behavior supports are provided. | GaDOE GNETS Directors Special Ed. Directors GLRS | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | Professional Learning Records | |
| 3. Provide professional learning on the <u>process</u> of conducting Functional Behavior Assessments, implementing Behavioral Intervention Plans and progress monitoring for students receiving GNETS services. | GaDOE GNETS Directors GLRS | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | | |
| 4. Identify evidence based practices and interventions for behavioral needs of | GaDOE GNETS Directors | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | | |

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| students with intellectual disabilities and autism. | GLRS | | | | |
| 5. Provide professional learning on evidence based practices and interventions for behavioral needs of students with intellectual disabilities and autism. | GaDOE GNETS Directors GLRS | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2012 June 30, 2013 | | |
| 6. Review and revise professional learning on developing and monitoring exit criteria for GNETS students. | GaDOE Special Ed. Directors GNETS Directors | Workgroup Leader | Review and revise by Oct. 1, 2011 Disseminate to all GNETS and Special Ed Directors by June 30, 2012 | Current document | |

GNETS Instructional Services

All students directly served through GNETS programs must receive instruction in grade level curriculum delivering the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). Teachers in GNETS programs should all be proficient in the delivery of instruction in CCGPS, in addition to specialized instruction to meet the academic needs of their students.

Goal 3: Students receiving services through GNETS programs will demonstrate proficiency on statewide assessments in order to enable them to become college and career ready.

| Action Step | Resources & Partners | Person Responsible | Timeline (Start/Completion Date) | Data | Status |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------|
| 1. Identify the specialized academic instruction, including technology, currently provided by GNETS programs. | GaDOE GLRS | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | Survey results Student academic data | |
| 2. Using the components of the school improvement process, | GaDOE GaDOE School | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 | Student academic | |

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| develop a plan for improving instruction in all GNETS Programs. | Improvement RESA | | June 30, 2012 | data | |
| 3. Implement the plan for improving instruction for all GNETS students. | GaDOE GaDOE School Improvement RESA | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2012 June 30, 2013 | Student academic data | |

Therapeutic Services

In conjunction with stakeholders, the GaDOE will identify a menu of evidence-based therapeutic interventions that are available to all GNETS students, recognizing that not all students will need each intervention. Standard interventions will be available to students who exhibit the need that resulted in placement at GNETS. In addition, each GNETS program will be required to employ the professionals required to provide the identified therapeutic interventions.

All GNETS programs will become proficient in delivering consultation and professional learning to support local school districts in providing students with educational opportunities that will enable them to become college and career ready. GNETS programs will do this by enhancing their outreach services to assist local districts in supporting students with significant emotional and behavioral disorders. The expertise of GNETS staff will be used to enhance outreach and consultation services to local school districts on an on-going basis. GNETS programs will provide the coordination of services to support students as they exit GNETS programs and services.

GaDOE will collaborate with interagency partners (i.e. the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities) to ensure that eligible GNETS students have access to mental health services through a system of care.

Goal 4: All GNETS programs will implement evidence based therapeutic practices and will monitor for fidelity of implementation and student impact.

| Action Step | Resources & Partners | Person Responsible | Timeline (Start/Completion Date) | Data | Status |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--------|
| 1. Identify evidence based strategies and interventions for students with emotional and behavioral disorders served through GNETS programs. | GaDOE Interagency Partnerships | Workgroup Leader | September 2011 January 1, 2012 | List of evidence based practices identified | |
| 2. Develop and implement a pilot project with GNETS programs on the implementation and evaluation of EBP. | GaDOE Interagency Partnerships | Workgroup Leader | January 1, 2012 June 30, 2013 | SWIS Self-Assessment | |
| 3. Implement a network wide plan for the delivery of evidence based practices for social emotional growth, with fidelity. | GaDOE Interagency Partnerships | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2013 June 30, 2014 | SWIS Self-Assessment | |
| 4. Develop formal agreements with interagency partners to ensure that | GaDOE Interagency Partnerships | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2014 | Formal Agreements | |

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| students receive mental health services through a system of care. | | | | | |
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GNETS Funding

GNETS is currently funded by a separate line item in the annual state budget and through the use of federal funding. A formula is used by GaDOE to determine individual program funding based upon a cumulative count of student placement each year. A three year average is used to arrive at the final funding figure for programs to mitigate any impact of major fluctuations in student counts from year to year for each program.

As part of this strategic plan the funding formula should be reviewed by stakeholders and revised as necessary to support the goals and action steps in the strategic plan. Funding for GNETS programs should ultimately support local school districts in providing students with educational opportunities that will enable them to become college and career ready. Stakeholders should consider outreach programs to local school districts and staff for therapeutic interventions when reviewing and making recommendations for revisions to the funding formula.

Goal 5: Develop a funding formula to support the implementation of the strategic plan to include a full array and continuum of services and to ensure efficient operation of the GNETS programs and services.

| Action Step | Resources & Partners | Person Responsible | Timeline (Start/Completion Date) | Data | Status |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------|--------|
| 1. Coordinate with all workgroups to identify essential funding needed to implement the strategic plan recommendations. | GaDOE GNETS Fiscal Agents | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | | |
| 2. Develop a proposal to revise the current funding formula to implement the strategic plan. | GaDOE Finance and Budget Office | Workgroup Leader | July 1, 2012 June 30, 2013 | | |

Location of GNETS Programs and Service Areas

GNETS programs should be located where students have access to age appropriate peers, general education classes, and all of the resources provided to their peers such as technology, media centers, etc. High school students must have the opportunity to earn the credits needed to prepare them for success in postsecondary education and/or the 21st century workplace. The students served through the GNETS programs must be provided instruction for the number of hours required for all public school students in Georgia.

The GNETS stakeholder committee shall review the service areas of each program and make recommendations for revised catchment areas.

Goal 6: Establish the location of service areas to ensure that services are delivered in an effective and efficient manner.

| Action Step | Resources & Partners | Person Responsible | Timeline (Start/Completion Date) | Data | Status |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--|--------|
| 1. Examine data related to the current service areas established for each GNETS program. | GaDOE | Workgroup leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | 2010 census data GaDOE SWD data | |
| 2. Coordinate with all workgroups to identify service areas needed to implement the strategic plan recommendations. | GADOE | Workgroup leader | July 1, 2011 June 30, 2012 | | |

Accountability

By Georgia law, GNETS is a network of programs, not a school or school district, therefore the ultimate accountability remains with the local educational agency (LEA). The development, review, and revision of the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) are shared responsibilities between the LEA and the GNETS program. The IEP is developed to address the needs of the student for academic, social, behavioral, functional and developmental supports as well as access to and progress in the general curriculum.

Prior to FY10, each GNETS director submitted an annual Report Card of Accountability to the GaDOE which included data on students served, including demographic information, performance on academic assessments, progress on social-emotional behavior, family participation, and other program level data. In FY 10, GaDOE instituted a new student level data collection process utilizing the statewide student information system that provides data for each student served in GNETS classes. These data can be disaggregated to develop GNETS program data and reports.

In February 2011, GaDOE provided GNETS directors the first annual performance summary for each program. The performance summary included annual data regarding student drop out, graduation, assessment performance, and post-secondary outcomes. Going forward, summary reports will include additional information unique to GNETS programs such as average length of placement in GNETS classes, students exited to less restrictive environments, social/emotional/behavioral improvement and the placement recidivism rate in GNETS classes.

Goal 7: Annual performance data from each of the 24 GNETS Programs will be used to evaluate program effectiveness and to guide improvement activities.

| Action Step | Resources and Partners | Person Responsible | Timeline (Start/Completion Date) | Data Source | Status |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|--|---|--------|
| 1. Analyze data points to determine any additional data to be collected or whether existing data collection is an effective measure of the services provided. | GaDOE Data Collections | Workgroup leader | July 1, 2011 Completed by June 30, 2012 | Program level file Assessment file | |
| 2. Design final performance summary report to include | GaDOE Data Collections | Workgroup leader | July 1, 2012 | Program level file | |

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| any additional data, as recommended. | | | Completed by June 30, 2013 | Assessment file | |
| 3. Produce a guidance document on using GNETS data for program improvement. | GaDOE Data Collections | Workgroup leader | July 1, 2013 June 30, 2014 | Program level file Assessment file | |

Strategic Plan Workgroup/Leader/Contact Info

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