



*We will lead the nation in improving student achievement.*

DIVISIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES and SUPPORTS

JUNE/JULY 2008 DL UPDATE

**Congratulations**

Dr. Zephine Smith-Dixon, Program Specialist for Professional Learning, has accepted a position as the Program Manager for the Elementary Curriculum/School Improvement Unit for the Division for Special Education Services. Zephine has worked diligently with Georgia's State Performance Plan process and disproportionality initiative. We look forward to working with Zephine in this new professional capacity.

**Welcome**

The Division for Special Education Services welcomes Dr. Kimberly Green, Program Specialist for Compliance. Kimberly has most recently worked for Atlanta Public Schools as a special education teacher for the BEST Academy and a program assistant/lead teacher at Benjamin S. Carson. Prior to joining APS Kimberly worked in Fulton and Clayton Counties. We are excited to have Kimberly join our staff.

**Farewell**

Rebecca Edenfield, Education Program Specialist for Compliance, has accepted a co-director position within the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Supports in the Rutland Program. Rebecca has made great contributions in improving achievement for students with disabilities through the Focused Monitoring process and collaborative efforts with the State Charter Schools and her District 10 colleagues. We will miss Rebecca and offer her best wishes in her new endeavor.

**Proposed Additions to the Regulations for IDEA**

There is a public comment period until July 28, 2008 for the proposed additions to the regulations for IDEA. We encourage each of you to submit written comments regarding these proposals. Written comments will either support the proposed rules as they are or will suggest changes for US DOE to consider.

The proposed rules do contain a significant change in consent requirements. The NPRM would allow parents who have already provided initial consent for placement in special education to revoke consent at any time. If consent is revoked, the student would no longer receive special education services and also would not have the protections of IDEA and the system would not have an obligation to make FAPE available when a parent revokes consent.

Other recommendations in the proposed rules include the funding for State charter schools, the timing of states making public reports regarding each LEA's data and their achievement of state targets, and the timing for the State to make determinations about local systems and the consequences associated with those determinations.

Please download and read the Federal Register. Once the federal regulations are final, it will require a change in state rules sometime next year. Here is a link to the Federal Register notice:  
<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-10522.pdf>.

### **District Determinations**

FY 08 was the first year the State Performance Plan indicator number 20 was added to Georgia's determination rubric. Indicator number 20 is a compliance indicator that states "reports are submitted in a timely manner". There are several reports that are due in the summer and early fall so we want to update you on the reports that are used in making the determination of whether or not the LEA meets this indicator. Timeliness is determined on the submission of the following: FTE-2, Student Record, Discipline, Timelines, Post Secondary Survey, Consolidated Application, and Disproportionality Reporting Requirements. Please pay close attention to the due dates for these reports. We recognize there may be other staff members in your system that may be responsible for the final submission of some of these reports but it is important to work collaboratively to ensure timely submission. If you have any questions you may contact Julie Moilanen at 404-657-9952 or [jmoilanen@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:jmoilanen@doe.k12.ga.us).

### **Teaching Communication Skills to Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities**

[The Op Foundation](#) is excited to announce Dr. Vincent Carbone's Three-Day Workshop, *Teaching Communication Skills to Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, to be held October 22-24, 2008, on the campus of Berry College in Rome, GA. Please visit [www.regonline.com/CarboneWorkshop2008](http://www.regonline.com/CarboneWorkshop2008) for more information and to register.

This is the only time this year that Dr. Carbone's Introduction to Verbal Behavior will be held in the Southeast. Space is limited so please feel free to pass this link along to any additional friends, family, faculty or staff who may be interested. Family scholarships are available.

### **2008 Touch the Future/Transition and SERID Conference and Expo: Hilton Atlanta October 22-26**

Touch the Future/Transition and SERID (Southeast Regional Institute on Deafness) embody the spirit of cooperation and collaboration in presenting this conference. At its heart, the joint venture acknowledges that all people are unique individuals and encourages them to celebrate their similarities and differences. While the conference will focus on the needs and priorities of people with disabilities, it aims to inspire all attendees to become a catalyst for positive long-term change in their communities.

A wide array of exhibits, keynote presentations and concurrent sessions designed to build a firm foundation of understanding or enhance an existing body of knowledge are the backbone of the conference. Presentations and discussions will address current effective practices, services and technologies related to seven key areas:

Employment/Rehabilitation

Education/ Transition  
Accessibility/ Assistive Technology  
Independent Living  
Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing  
Interpreters  
Alternative Augmentative Communication

This is the first time that the two conferences -- SERID, which focuses on educational and professional development for individuals who work with consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and late-deafened, and the Touch the Future/Transition Conference, which focuses on issues surrounding assistive technology and education for people with disabilities -- have been held simultaneously.

The conference is designed to allow participants to explore state-of-the-art tools, techniques, principles, strategies, and innovative technologies that will help individuals with disabilities participate in their community and prepare for success. General Sessions with noted speakers and workshops on a variety of topics will be held throughout the conference, which is expected to attract about 1,200 attendees. An exhibit hall showcasing the latest assistive technologies from all over the country and an interactive assistive technology computer lab will also be onsite.

For registration and more information, go to: <http://www.touchthefutureandtransition.org>

### **Professional Learning Opportunities**

To support systems in providing access to the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports have developed two new professional learning opportunities for the 2008-2009 school year.

*Introduction to Instructional Techniques and Assistive Technology for Students with Severe and Profound Disabilities* will feature two, two-day sessions. Intended for teacher teams (one teacher and one therapist-speech, occupational or physical) who teach students with severe and/or profound disabilities, the teams will receive instruction in basic instructional techniques and effective use of assistive technology to support instructional access. Participating teams will receive an assistive technology "starter equipment kit" as part of the training, which will consist of some of the basic equipment necessary to provide curriculum access to students with severe and profound disabilities. Tentative dates for this training are mid September, with the second session scheduled in November.

*Maximizing Access to the GPS and Use of the Resource Board* is targeted for those teachers who currently lack necessary software to use many of the supporting attachments on the GeorgiaStandards.org Resource Board. Participants will receive a copy of the commonly-used software as part of the instruction to enable them to create new activities which align to the GPS. There will be two sessions scheduled for 2008-2009. The opportunity to receive this software as part of training will NOT be repeated; each session will limited to approximately twenty participants.

Priority for both of these activities will be given to beginning teachers and those systems in size groups C, D, and E. Additional information will be available in late July. For more information, please contact Kayse Harshaw at 404.463.5281 or [sharshaw@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:sharshaw@doe.k12.ga.us).

### **26th Annual Closing the Gap Conference, Assistive Technology in Special Education and Rehabilitation**

Closing The Gap is excited to announce its 26th Annual Closing the Gap Conference, Assistive Technology in Special Education and Rehabilitation, October 14-18, 2008, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

This renowned conference helps teachers, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and other professionals broaden their understanding and implementation of effective assistive technology that can change the life of a person with special needs!

The complete event includes two days (October 14-15, 2008) of in-depth, preconference workshops, followed by three days (October 16-18, 2008) of one- and two-hour presentations, along with many state-of-the-art commercial exhibits and hands-on opportunities. CEUs and academic credit are available. Early registration (by June 30th), parent, student and group discounts do apply.

We encourage you to register and to send your AT Team as well. This conference can make a difference in the teaching of your staff and in the delivery of services to students with special needs! With our resources, assistive technology can, quite easily, be considered and implemented, with no child left behind.

For complete and up-to-date conference information, and the other services available, please visit the Web site at [www.closingthegap.com](http://www.closingthegap.com).

### **Educational Interpreting Assessment**

The **Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA)** will be offered at **Georgia Perimeter College** in metropolitan Atlanta on **August 15 and 16, 2008**. The registration fee is **\$125 for residents of Georgia**. There are 40 assessment slots available, and preference will be given to those who have not taken the EIPA within 12 months of August 15. Prior completion of a professional sign language interpreting program and experience in the educational setting are recommended.

To register, go to <http://www.rrfcnetwork.org/mprrc/ask12>, and click on **EIPA Registration**.

For more information on the EIPA and educational interpreting, go to <http://www.classroominterpreting.org/>

### **Low Vision Evaluations**

The Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports have received numerous questions about the need for completing low vision evaluations prior to determining eligibility for visual impairments. The Georgia Rules for Special Education, adopted by the State Board of Education on June 14, 2007, specify the types of evaluations that must be conducted before eligibility for visual impairments can be established. Based on these rules, a low vision evaluation is required prior to determining initial eligibility for visual impairments. However, in some situations it may be difficult to obtain the evaluation in a timely manner and for some students, the functional vision assessment may yield more useful information.

Kathy Segers, our Program Specialist for Blind and Visually Impaired, has developed a list frequently asked questions to assist local school system staff in addressing the completion of these evaluations in certain circumstances. The file containing these questions is attached to this DL Update.

**Dispute Resolution Tips**

Some disputes between parents of special needs students and systems could be avoided if school systems learn to recognize some of the indicators of possible parental concerns. Being able to identify these indicators could help you plan ahead to implement specific strategies to resolve issues and avoid impending conflicts. Responding to these situations quickly and effectively should help build positive communication with parents.

<b>Parent Action</b>	<b>Proactive System Response</b>
Parent requests student records	Document the request and respond in a timely and appropriate manner. Have a policy in place that allows you to retrieve records efficiently from multiple sources. Remember to redact information that could identify another student. Make copies of all documents you provide to parents. Communicate directly with parents- Is there something you are concerned about? Should we convene a meeting?
Parent requests an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)	Your first step should be to have a conversation with the parents. Why are they requesting the IEE? Re-evaluate your system's assessments for flaws or inaccuracies. Remember the federal law entitles parents to one IEE at public expense for each district evaluation with which they disagree. *State rule requires that a system must ensure the IEE is granted at public expenses or initiate a due process hearing to demonstrate the appropriateness of the school system assessment.
Parents bring an advocate or attorney to the IEP meeting	Understand that parents have a right to bring representation to the meeting. IDEA requires "knowledge or special expertise regarding the child". However, the IDEA allows parents to make that determination. Consider that the support will help them understand the IEP process and their rights. Try to maintain direct dialogue with parents during the IEP meeting and keep the focus on the student. Make local decisions regarding the circumstances for determining the school system legal representation in IEP meetings. Consider training for staff in facilitation skills.
Parents request audio or video tape in meetings	Neither the IDEA nor federal law addresses the issue of recording IEP meetings. Local policy should be consistent with state law. Have a local policy in place that is implemented uniformly. Consider the needs of non English speaking individuals or those who may require this record for understanding the process at a later time. It should be noted that videotaping can be intimidating to IEP team members and could impact the interactions in the meeting. This may be a consideration when establishing policy.
Parents complain about the district, staff or other students.	Be prepared to explain the formal complaint processes available to parents. However, listening for details, confirming you have their information correct and explaining the steps you will take to investigate can be reassuring to parents. Take prompt action to investigate and establish a timeline to get back with the parent and follow up. Many situations escalate because a parent does not receive a prompt response or a prompt return call.
Parents do not participate in the IEP process	This situation can have many root causes. Parents may feel intimidated, have negative past experiences with schools or misunderstand the IEP process. Try to keep communication open and learn about reasons for refusal to participate. Explore factors i.e., time constraints, size of the group in meeting, overwhelmed by documents, literacy or language barriers. Enlist system support staff (social workers, ELL teachers, counselors) to brainstorm alternative approaches. Train staff to consider these issues and learn strategies to promote engagement.

**Dates to Remember**

**July**

31 Due Date for Timelines Summary Report

**August**

1 Due Date for Early Intervening Services (EIS) Documentation

12-13 Team Members Training for Focused Monitoring FY09

20 Focused Monitoring Orientation for Systems Selected for Monitoring FY09

31 Due Date for District Consolidated Application CLIP

**September**

22 Secondary Summit, Macon Centerplex

**October**

22-26 Touch the Future/Transition and SERID Conference and Expo, Atlanta Hilton

**November**

4-7 G-CASE Fall Conference, Savannah Riverfront Hotel

# 2008-2009 *Partners in Policymaking Class*



*Partners in Policymaking is currently taking applications for the 2008-2009 class.*

**Partners in Policymaking** is an innovative leadership training opportunity designed to involve and empower people with developmental disabilities, parents of children with disabilities and other family members. The Partners program is the most comprehensive educational program on disability issues in Georgia.



#### **How You Will Benefit:**

- Understand best practices
- Connect with national and Georgia experts
- Network with other advocates from around the state
- Be a part of creating positive change



#### **What You Will Cover:**

- Community Organizing
- Inclusive Education
- State/Federal Governmental Affairs
- Employment
- Housing
- History of Disability

**Who Should Apply:** People with developmental disabilities, parents of children with developmental disabilities, and family members are the primary target groups of the Partners program. We are looking for individuals who are seriously interested in developing their advocacy skills for the benefit of strengthening their families and being a part of local and statewide advocacy efforts.



**For more information or to apply online, go to [aadd.org](http://aadd.org), or contact Rita Young at 404-881-9777 ext. 220, or [rita@aadd.org](mailto:rita@aadd.org).**



**AADD**

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