



We will lead the nation in improving student achievement.

DIVISIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES and SUPPORTS

SEPTEMBER 2008 DL UPDATE

Welcome

The Division for Special Education Supports welcomes a new staff member, Emily Jennette as an education program specialist in the Professional Learning Unit. Emily will work with the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) in a shared position with the Division for Teacher Quality. Her primary focus will be recruitment and retention of special education teachers. As Georgia's 2008 Teacher of the Year, Emily had the opportunity to visit many school districts and schools throughout the state. Please join us in welcoming Emily to the Division for Special Education Supports.

Testing Conference Elluminate for Special Education Directors

To support system special education directors who may not have attended the System Test Coordinator Conference this year or would like more targeted information about the inclusion of students with disabilities on state-mandated assessments, an Elluminate session will be presented on 09-29-08 from 9:00 to 2:45 (with a lunch break). Personnel from the Assessment Division will provide an overview of each of the state-mandated assessments, updates for the 08-09 school year, and information on how accommodations are provided within the assessment. Further information about the session, including the link for the Assessment Elluminate site and an agenda will be coming soon.

Transition Assessment

Transition Assessment and how to tie this assessment to your measurable post secondary goals for successful post secondary outcomes for students with disabilities remains a critical professional learning area for many Georgia school systems. An outstanding opportunity for increasing knowledge and application of this and other core principles of transition is:

The Touch the Future/Tools for Life/SERID Conference is scheduled for October 22- 27, 2008 at the Atlanta Hilton . Featured during the pre-conference for transition this year is Mary Morningstar of the University of Kansas/Transition Coalition. Her sessions will focus on maximizing team efforts in conducting transition activities and assessments for effective outcomes. This conference has consistently provided a broad spectrum of transition-related perspectives and outcomes centered around such topics as assistive technology, free or low cost assessments that will help to determine your student's appropriate transition goals and best practices for transition. For additional information, contact Lu Nations-Miller (bnations@doe.k12.ga.us) or <http://www.touchthefutureandtransition.org>

American Sign Language as a Foreign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) as a Foreign Language is an acceptable option for college preparatory diplomas or as an elective for all students. This means that ASL is also a core academic content course, so teachers of ASL as a foreign language fall under the Highly Qualified provision of No Child Left Behind. There are multiple routes to becoming Highly Qualified to teach ASL as a foreign language.

The most common route to becoming Highly Qualified to teach ASL:

- 1) Hold clear renewable professional educator certification in any field, **AND**
- 2) Take and pass the Georgia Assessment for the Certification of Educators (GACE) in American Sign Language (Test 150: See the GACE website at: <http://www.gace.nesinc.com>), **AND**
- 3) Apply to have ASL added to your certificate.

Another route: 1) Hold clear renewable professional educator certification in any field, **AND** 2) hold a college degree with a major in American Sign Language, **AND** 3) apply to have ASL added to your certificate.

The new GPS for ASL I and II are posted via the **Modern Languages and Latin** link at www.georgiastandards.org.

Journal of Learning Disabilities: Student Artwork Submissions for JLD Cover

The Hammill Institute on Disabilities is now searching for Cover Art submissions for the Journal of Learning Disabilities for 2009. Below is the information regarding submissions. If you know of any person or organization that might be interested, please contact:

Peggy Kipping, Publications Director
Hammill Institute on Disabilities
8700 Shoal Creek Blvd.
Austin, TX 78757-6897
512/451-3521, ext. 630
FAX: 512/451-3278
e-mail: peggy@hammill-institute.org.

New Special Education Directors' Mentoring Academy

The Georgia Council for Administrators of Special Education (G-CASE) and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) are proud to collaborate once again to offer the New Special Education Directors' Mentoring Academy for the 2008-2009 school year. This will mark the fifth year that G-CASE and the GaDOE have offered the academy.

The purpose of the New Directors' Academy is designed to provide long-term, sustained professional learning for special education administrators to become change agents in their systems, ultimately impacting the practices of teachers and the educational performance of students. Over the course of the school year, the participants will meet for five full days of training:

September 3, 2008	Preconference Session 3:00-6:00 p.m. at Callaway Gardens.
September 4-5, 2008	New Directors' Academy at Callaway Gardens.
November 5, 2008	New Directors' Academy in Savannah/Preconference session at G-CASE.
February 1, 2009	New Directors Academy in Atlanta as GAEL preconference session.
March 23, 2009	New Directors' Academy in Athens as a Preconference for Spring GaDOE Special Education Leadership Conference .

The New Directors' Academy uses the most valuable resource in the state to support new administrators: veteran Directors of Special Education. The mentor directors and the protégés will work in pairs, small groups, and large groups to share and learn from each other. Each participant commits to participate in each training session, an on-line e-mail group, and a total of 10 hours of collaboration outside of the training sessions with their mentor/protégé.

The academy focuses on two large strands of objectives: 1) school reform activities (e.g., improving teacher practices), and 2) administrative leadership activities (e.g., reporting data). Ultimately, both sets of skills are needed to ultimately impact students' educational performance. Over the past three years, participants have reported that the academy has facilitated their growth not only in knowledge, but also in their leadership practices.

If you are interested in participating in the 2008-2009 G-CASE New Directors' Academy, please register online at the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders web site: <http://www.ciclt.net/gael/>. The registration fee for new directors is \$ 175 per person for the entire academy. Mentors do not pay a registration fee. Professional Learning Units (PLUs) will be provided for participants who attend every session.

Pre-Conference Session Prior to the fall training day there will be a pre-conference session offered for all interested directors. Both mentors and new directors are invited to attend. The topic for the September pre-conference session is Making AYP for Students with Disabilities. Experienced directors will share information about how AYP is determined and how they have impacted achievement in their systems. In order to participate in the pre-conference session, you must be participating in the New Directors' Academy. The preconference session will be held from 3:00-6:00 p.m. on September 3 at Callaway Gardens.

If you have questions, please contact Lynne Williams at 404-657-9971, lwilliam@doe.k12.ga.us or Bonnie Seery at 229 225-4380

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 2008 Awards of Excellence Recognition Program for Special Education was held in Atlanta on August 13, 2008, at the Department of Education's State Board of Education meeting.

This year the Georgia Department of Education honored Georgia 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

The 2008 Honorees were:

Margaret Appel	Starrs Mill High School	Fayette County
Akeem Hill	Tri-Cities High School	Fulton County
Andrew Hohenstein	Chapel Hill High School	Douglas County
Maria Laucella	Sequoyah High School	Cherokee County
Tiffany Slieff	Berkmar High School	Gwinnett County
Andrew Smith	Rockdale County High School	Rockdale County
Bianca Thurman	Murray County High School	Murray County
Shiloh Vander Hyden	Forsyth Central High School	Forsyth County
Shatoya Williams	Valdosta High School	Valdosta City

Thanks to all you who completed and submitted applications for these awards. We had many outstanding nominees, each of whom will receive a certificate of recognition. A special thanks to all of the special education directors, parents, and teachers who attended this celebration with their students. Watch for the 2009 Awards of Excellence Application that will be available after January 2009.

Parental Request for Evaluation

We have received a lot of questions and comments about parents directly requesting an evaluation to determine if their child is a child with a disability. It seems that even when parents are directly referring their child, many schools are refusing to conduct an evaluation and telling parents that 12 weeks of interventions are required prior to initiating an evaluation.

This is inappropriate and is actually contrary to guidance contained in the IDEA Implementation Manual. First, the parental rights clearly state that parents may refer their child for an evaluation. When a parent submits a request or asks for an evaluation, then the school or system has an obligation to consider the request immediately.

The school or system may respond by meeting with the parent and explaining other resources or avenues for assistance (such as tiered interventions or SST). Many parents are unaware of such resources. If the parent continues to request an evaluation, the school should either initiate the evaluation process by obtaining the parental consent to evaluate and providing a copy of the parental rights or provide prior written notice to the parents (with all required components) explaining why they are refusing to provide the evaluation and a copy of the parent rights. In most circumstances, the school should explain to the parent the dispute resolution options available to them to try to obtain an evaluation.

Once the evaluation timeline is initiated, the school can also conduct tiered interventions during this evaluation period and gather data to inform the eligibility decision. The parent may have information about interventions they have tried also. An eligibility decision should be made prior to the conclusion of the 60 day timeline. If there is not adequate information, then the child is not eligible at that time, but may be considered again in the future if data indicates the need to reconsider. Remember that the only eligibility category that requires a specific number of weeks of intervention data is specific learning disability (SLD).

For young children coming from a home environment or even home schooled children, the timeline also should begin upon direct referral. Many systems are providing the parents with a packet of interventions to try and requesting that they keep data. That is one option for gathering information, but some parents will be overwhelmed and unable to provide data. Another method for gathering information about what has been tried includes simply interviewing the parents or caretakers about what they have done or what has been tried. This needed data should be gathered within the 60-day timeline for evaluation rather than delaying the evaluation period.

The other issue that continues to come up is the question of a comprehensive evaluation when conducting initial evaluations to determine whether a child is a child with a disability. The evaluation, by federal definition, should be comprehensive enough to identify all possible disabilities and the educational needs of the child. When a referral is made for an initial evaluation, the evaluation should include current data available on the child and other information provided by the school and the parent. For example, if the student is referred and his problems are reading and handwriting, the comprehensive evaluation would include information to determine why he is struggling with reading such as processing evaluations as well as motor evaluations to determine why handwriting is a problem. Although PT and OT are considered a related service, if the problems noted are part of the referring issue, then those evaluations should be completed as part of the initial evaluation to determine if the child is a child with a disability and what his or her educational needs are.

Please refer to the IDEA Implementation Manual for more information about these procedures in the sections on Child Find, on Evaluations and Reevaluations and on Eligibility Determination. Also please remember that professional judgment should be used at all times to manage timelines and determine eligibility and do so with the student's best interest in mind.

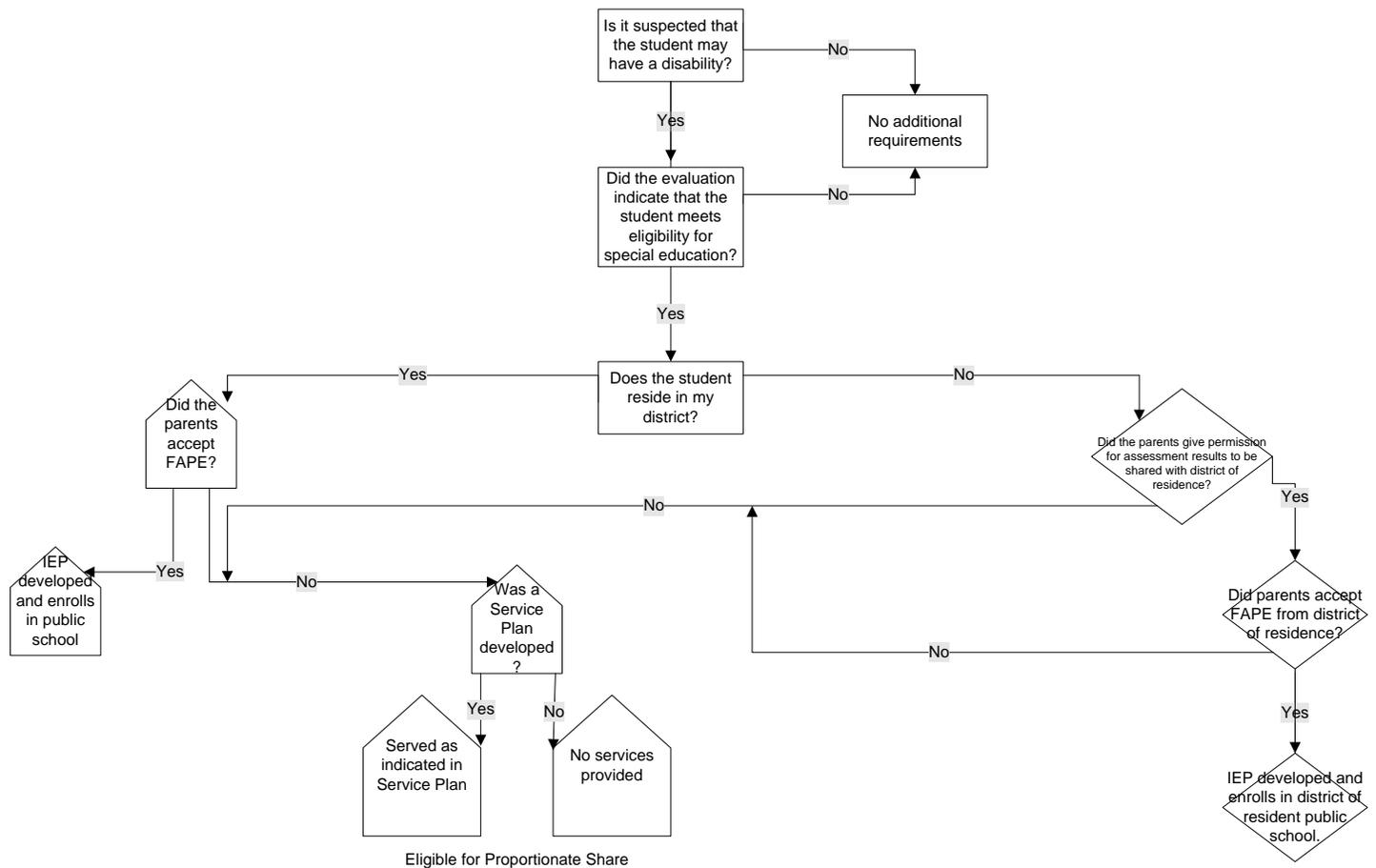
Child Find Requirements for Students Attending Private Schools Located within the School District

The flow chart below outlines the local school district's Child Find responsibilities for students attending private schools located within the school district. The process of evaluation, eligibility determination, and IEP development for eligible students is clearly specified for students who reside within the district and for students who reside within a different school district.

Child Find and Service Requirements for Students Attending Private Schools Located within My School District



Parentally Placed in Private School
Student Age 6-21



Dates to Remember

September

- 3 New Special Education Directors' Academy Preconference, 3-6 p.m., Callaway
- 3 Focused Monitoring Orientation for Systems Selected for Monitoring in FY09
- 4-5 New Special Education Directors' Academy, Callaway Gardens
- 8 Directors' Elluminate Session 10-11 a.m.
- 18-19 State Advisory Panel, Unicoi State Park
- 22 Secondary Summit, Macon Centerplex

October

- 7 Special Education Directors' Discussion Forum
- 22-26 Touch the Future/Transition and SERID Conference and Expo, Atlanta Hilton

November

- 5 New Special Education Directors' Academy, Savannah Riverfront Hotel
- 4-5 State Advisory Panel, Savannah, location to be announced
- 6-7 G-CASE Fall Conference, Savannah Riverfront Hotel
- 16-18 National Dropout Prevention Center Conference, Ravinia Hotel, Atlanta