



DIVISION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES and SUPPORTS

APRIL 2011 District Liaison (DL) UPDATE

Congratulations

Mrs. Nancy O'Hara was selected as the 2010 G-CASE Distinguished Service Award winner. Her diverse contributions to the field of special education in Georgia made her an easy choice for this award. Many people serve others during their career, but very few impact so many teachers, students, administrators, and parents the way that Mrs. O'Hara has in her thirty plus years of service in Georgia. For the past thirty-four years, Nancy O'Hara has taught, led, and served both students and teachers in the state of Georgia. She has devoted her career to the honored service of teaching and guiding students with disabilities. As a member and friend of G-CASE, Mrs. O'Hara worked with the governing officers to wield great state-wide influence on the training and preparation of special education administrators. In summary, Nancy O'Hara represents the best in special education; someone who is dedicated, tireless, and a positive influence. She has dedicated her entire career to Georgia public education and to Georgia students. The impact of her service will undoubtedly be felt for many years to come. Her service is most definitely extraordinary and she is most deserving of this award.

Directors' Webinar April 6, 2011

Please mark your calendars for the Special Education Directors' Monthly Webinar that is held the first Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m.

The 2011 Special Education Spring Leadership Meeting

The 2011 Special Education Spring Leadership Meeting held in Athens on March 21st-23rd was a great success! Thank you to each of you for your attendance and participation. The meeting certainly highlighted the extent of technology, and assistive technology, available in the state of Georgia. This technology will support students with disabilities and the work of the Division for Special Education Services and Supports.

Many presenters are updating their handouts from the conference. The updated documents should be available on the GaDOE website by the first of April. Handouts can be accessed by going to either the Special Education page http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx of the GaDOE website and clicking on "Sp Ed Leadership Meeting 2011 Handouts" in the WHAT'S NEW box on the right side of the page OR by navigating directly to the handouts page http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx?PageReq=CIEXCConf2011.

The Division will use information from the evaluations for this conference to ensure that the upcoming conference meets the needs of districts. GCASE has emailed a conference evaluation this week, please take a few minutes to complete it.

Honorary Chair at the Spring Leadership Meeting

Justin Salter, a high school junior from the Columbia County School District, served as honorary chair of the Spring Leadership Meeting. Justin was selected as conference chair based on his highly effective use of assistive technology. Justin uses a DynaVox for all communication purposes. He introduced the keynote speaker,

Dr. L. C. "Buster" Evans, Superintendent of Forsyth Schools using this system. Justin's introduction was well presented and captured the significant aspects of Dr. Evan's career.

Justin used the DynaVox's onscreen keyboard and a core bank of words to create the phrases and sentences used in his introduction. He assigned each message to a special button that he could retrieve easily. In order to generate words, phrases, and sentences, Justin normally uses two programs that run simultaneously on his DynaVox: the DynaVox Speaking Software and Scan Buddy, a scanning application. He makes his selections using a switch on the head rest of his wheelchair.

At the Spring Leadership Meeting; however, there was a switch box malfunction that made Scan Buddy unreliable and forced Justin to improvise on the spot...a little unsettling for his parents and Carson Cochran, a Division Assistive Technology Specialist. Justin, however, didn't "miss a beat" and his introduction of Dr. Evans remained considered and accurate.

Justin told Carson afterwards that he was only "a bit nervous". Kudos to Justin and a "big thanks" to his school system and his parents. His mother, Heloise Salter, is a parent mentor in Columbia County.

FY 12 Focused Monitoring Parent and Peer Recruitment

The Compliance Unit in the Division for Special Education Services is requesting assistance in recruiting parents and peers to participate as members of the FY 12 Focused Monitoring Teams. Specific information regarding team member participation is attached to this update. The attachment may be reproduced as needed. Please share the following information with potential applicants:

- Updated applications will be available on the GaDOE website by April 1, 2011.
- Team Member Training will be conducted in August or September. The training location will be announced at a later date.
- Parent Participants are required to participate in two days of training. **Lodging expenses will be paid up front by GaDOE for Parent Participants only.** Other expenses, such as cost of travel and meals, must be paid by the parent participants and an expense statement submitted for reimbursement.
- Peer Participants must pay **all** training expenses and submit an expense statement for reimbursement. Peers may choose to stay overnight or drive in the day of training.

Save the Date: Autism Academy 2011 Sponsored by the GaDOE

In response to district requests, the Autism Academy will provide an in-depth study of autism spectrum disorders. The academy will focus on both the low functioning and high functioning aspects of autism. Intended for educators in the classroom, the academy will include strategies, educational practices and methodologies along with classroom set up and district program design. This academy will build on previous sessions, therefore, attendance is recommended for those who attended the previous autism academy training and/or GATTAP regional team meetings, i.e. classroom teachers, speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and behavior specialists. Selection of attendees should be based on staff dedicated to building capacity within the local district. **Registration information will be forth-coming soon.** For additional information, contact Dr. Alice Murphy at mmurphy@doe.k12.ga.us or 404-657-9957.

June 22 – 24, Athens
The Rutland Academy
1250 Oglethorpe Avenue
Athens, Ga. 30306

Special Education Newsletter

The Division for Special Education Supports is requesting assistance in promoting the GaDOE Special Education Newsletter. The newsletter is designed for classroom teachers and other interested staff. Please email teachers and other staff letting them know that they can sign up for the newsletter by sending a blank email to join-specialeducation@list.doe.k12.ga.us. Thank you for your time and assistance.

2011 NASDSE Professional Learning Series

Virtual Special Education: Issues and Answers is the final session of the 2011 NASDSE Professional Learning Series. The session will be available online beginning Wednesday, May 4, 2011 after 1 p.m. ET. To access the session:

Open your web browser to <http://pd.nasdse.org/>

Click on the session you want to view

There will be a screen that asks for an access code: **Georgia Access Code: 1011GA5**

The access code remains the same throughout the series.

All documents needed for participation will be directly available for download when the participant logs in to the session.

FY11 Postsecondary Data Collection for 2009-10 Exiters

Your Postsecondary Survey is now available on the GaDOE portal as a view only application with file export capabilities. The survey will open for data entry on June 1, 2011. The completed report must be submitted by July 31, 2011. Since July 31st falls on a Sunday, surveys submitted Monday, August 1st will meet timeline requirements.

Directions for [accessing and completing](#) the survey are posted in the Document's section of the GaDOE portal. Please click on the words "Special Education" (**NOT THE FOLDER**). Locate the "Postsecondary Definitions and Directions FY2011 Data Collection for 2009-10 Exiters".

Click on the  icon. It is recommended that you save a copy of this document for future reference as you complete your survey. Attached you will find the definitions for postsecondary activities. Please read carefully, many definitions have changed.

Georgia Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol for Disproportionality

The Georgia Department of Education is extending the submission deadline for districts that are required to complete the Georgia Self-Assessment Monitoring Protocol for Disproportionality. Based on the revised timeline, the required districts must submit the Self-Assessment on or before Monday, May 2, 2011 by emailing an electronic copy to Donna Drakeford (Email: ddrakeford@doe.k12.ga.us Phone: (404) 656-2427) and/or Zephine Smith-Dixon (Email: zsmith@doe.k12.ga.us Phone: (404) 463-0678). The Department adjusted this deadline to allow local disproportionality team leaders ample time to gather the appropriate stakeholders and conduct the review process with fidelity. Be mindful that a district shall submit one Self-Assessment-even if the district was cited for having multiple areas of disproportionality (e.g., underrepresentation, discipline, etc.). Page 3, in the Self-Assessment, provides information about the mandatory Focus Areas and Attachments. We look forward to reviewing your submission and supporting you in improving performance for Georgia's children.

Parent Surveys

Parent Surveys are being completed in designated schools for this year's survey cycle. Surveys must be returned by June 1st. They are to be sent to the UGA research unit listed in the survey materials. Your hard work in getting the surveys returned is greatly appreciated, but remember to discuss the survey questions on "satisfaction" with your staff. Detailed information and ideas for staff and parents is available at www.parentmentors.org. An electronic version of the survey is on the GaDOE web site on the Special Education Supports and Services page. Please email Patti Solomon at psolomon@doe.k12.ga.us with questions.

Parent Mentor Partnership

Parent Mentor Partnership Applications Are Available!

An application must be completed in order to renew funding for current parent mentors who will be serving during the 2011-2012 school year. Districts interested in hiring a parent mentor for the first time must also complete an application in order to become part of this nationally recognized school/family initiative. Applications were sent by email earlier this week and are **due by the close business on April 7th**. This requires a quick turnaround, so please review the attached application, then fax or scan it with your superintendent's signature. If you have

questions, please email Patti Solomon, Family Engagement Specialist at psolomon@doe.k12.ga.us. You can also contact your District Liaison for additional information.

Parent Mentor Plans Due!

The Parent Mentor's Plan Summary for 2010-2011 is due before the parent mentor leaves for the school year. At the directors' request, the Planning Form for 2011-2012 is also due at the same time. Please remind your mentor to insert the district name in the title when the plan is saved and make sure the summary is signed prior to sending it electronically.

We recommend your parent mentor stay with the same indicator for several years in order to build a sustainable, measurable plan. In previous years, many parent mentors took advantage of one-to-one assistance from Lynn Williams, GaDOE consultant on parent mentor data plans. In addition, Ms. Williams also conducted extensive trainings in the northern and southern divisions. If your parent mentor did not take advantage of either of these learning opportunities, he/she needs to talk with their regional representative in order to discuss the kind of assistance needed.

The new Planning and Evaluation Forms have both proven to be great tools in increasing the quality and rigor of family engagement work. Some revisions were made after feedback from the parent mentors, so please make sure your mentor is using the final forms. The final Evaluation Forms for this school year will be reviewed by selected members of the GaDOE staff using the development grid presented at last October's Leadership Conference in Athens. We will give you the 2010-2011 Plan Summary Review at the next GaPMP Kickoff meeting and will also leave time for districts to discuss their new plans for 2011-2012.

GaDOE's Parent Mentor Partnership Annual Meeting

SAVE THE DATE...

The GaDOE's Parent Mentor Partnership will kick off its 10th school year at its annual meeting on September 21-23, 2011 at the UGA University Hotel and Convention Center. Pre-Sessions will be conducted on September 21st. The conference is tentatively scheduled to begin at 4:00 p.m. on September 21st and end at noon on September 23rd.

Specific details will be sent in late July with registration opening in mid-August. Please let me know if you have suggestions for specific strands. Directors who would like to learn more about family engagement and the work done by the parent mentors are welcome to register.

A drive-in **orientation** will be held on September 7th. This orientation is offered for new mentors and directors for the 2011-2012 school year as well as mentors who started after last year's GaPMP Kickoff Meetings. The location will be announced by mid-summer after we see the most central location for the participants. (New Districts are asked to hire the mentor by late August.)

Thank you to the Parent Mentors who did an excellent job in creating and hosting the Virtual HotSPOT! The virtual communication session and the many step-by-step directions at the HotSPOT received high marks. Parent mentors also did a great job keeping the GaDOE Facebook page up to date with photos and information about the conference. It was difficult for participants to carve out time to go to the HotSPOT to view the tools available. Plans are currently underway to make the HotSPOT more available to Leadership meeting participants.

2011 Calendar of Events

April

- 1 Final Submission for Georgia High Cost Fund (GHCF)
- 6 Special Education Directors' Monthly Elluminate 10:00 a.m.
- 8 Special Education Student Record: Duplicate Resolutions

May

- 5 Georgia Vision Educators Statewide Consortia/Georgia National Agenda Taskforce Educational Technology Centers: Kennesaw State-Host Site 9:00am-4:00pm
- 31 Parent Surveys Completed

June

- 1** All Special Education Budget Amendments Due
- 15** Final Student Record Submission – Including Special Education Record and GNETS Program Record
- 30** Disproportionality Documentation Form/CEIS Student Data for the Portal

July

- 31** Preschool Exit Data (FY11 Data)
Postsecondary Survey (FY09-10 Exiters)
Timelines (FY11 Data)
*July 31st is a Sunday; therefore all reports must be submitted by August 1, 2011.