

President's Corner



Happy Holidays!

It was good seeing so many of you in Savannah! We had a record number of attendees for our "Transforming Transition: Pk-12" fall conference many of you have shared that you gleaned information that you found relevant and useful in refining, refreshing, or renewing transition programs in your districts.

Our keynote speakers encouraged us to assess student interest, collaborate with community partners, and consider literacy as a component of ensuring students have the skills needed to achieve post-secondary success.

G-CASE has many professional learning opportunities available within the coming months and we hope that you will take advantage of these sessions.

One of our greatest responsibilities is to stay current with issues impacting public education. As a member of the national CASE policy and legislative committee, I was recently reminded of this tenant. I encourage you to visit the national CASE website and review the information found on the legislative advocacy page. When the opportunity presents itself, please take a moment to provide feedback or to write legislators so that our voice is heard. Review the Case policy and legislative page to so that you will know CASE's position on a variety of issues. The most recent policy states are on safety, mental health, diversity, equity, inclusion, and personnel shortages facing public education.

During this holiday season, I hope that you will take time to truly disconnect and rest. Do at least two things you love and spend quality time with those you love.

-Michele Sayles Harris

Notes from the Executive Director



Things I heard at the 2023 Fall G-CASE Conference:

- People with autism and other disabilities possess innate talent for tasks involved in the recycling and refurbishing of electronics. (Bill Morris, Co-Founder, Blue Star Recyclers)
- Long-term changes can be made by evaluating your system Pupil Progression Policy, evaluating the system MTSS Framework, restructuring special education classrooms from PK-12th grade, reading intervention Grades PK-3, developing early dropout intervention and career exploration programs at 6th grade (Karen Acquires: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Graduation)
- Retention is the New Recruitment. How do we keep our teachers? High Leverage Practices! (*Wina Low*, *State Director: Shine Your Light*). Bring up the presentation on the G-CASE website for resources.
- A district that offers inadequate or ineffective behavioral interventions significantly increases its chances of being found liable for a denial of FAPE. (Beth Morris and Reagan Sauls, Attorneys with Parker Poe; Legal 101 to SELDA)
- Believe in Public Education! (Phil Hartley, Pereira, Kirby, Kisinger & Nguyen, LLP)
- Transforming Transitions. Transforming Lives (Dr. Grant Rivera, Superintendent, Marietta City Schools)
- We love coming to the G-CASE more than any other conference. Your people are so interested and interesting! (*Conference Sponsor*)
- Forty-four Breakout Sessions! We need to divide up so we can learn and then re-deliver back in our system. (Special Education Director bringing a large group to the conference)
- ◆ The legal presentations were so good they scared me a little and taught me a lot! (SELDA New Director)
- ◆ Join CEC! Start up a local Chapter! The benefits include advocacy, professional learning/conferences, publications, awards, networking, collaborating, belonging, and a ton of resources! (*Dr. Karin Fisher, President, Ga CEC*)
- "Thank you, Michele, for devoting this year's conference to the importance the role Transition plays on student outcomes!" (G-CASE Executive Board Member to Michele Sayles Harris, G-CASE President)
- You wouldn't believe all the charcuterie food and drinks we had at the SELDA and ADA Socials! (G-CASE Executive Board Member who attended both events)
- "I'm already thinking about the theme for next year's conference ...!" (Dr. Brad Bowling, G-CASE President-Elect)

Thank you, all! Please visit our <u>website</u> to view the presentations that have been shared with us. (Home Page/Professional Learning/G-CASE Fall Conference/Conference Information Link).

Thanks for all you do!

Sarah & Burbach



G-CASE

Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

VISION

A unified voice promoting excellence in leaders of programs for students with disabilities

MISSION

- > Promote professional learning
- ➤ Promote engaged membership
- ➤ Promote effective leadership

PURPOSE

G-CASE advocates for improved services for students with disabilities

STRATEGY

By offering effective performance-based professional learning and promoting the engagement of members, *G*-CASE will impact state and national policy and legislation.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Impact legislation and policy

- To impact state legislation and policy by identifying and advocating for key issues/legislative priorities
- To impact national legislation and policy related to IDEA and other special education-focused regulations by identifying and advocating for key issues.

Promote engaged membership

- To increase, honor, and celebrate membership in G-CASE (state organization) by ensuring member loyalty, retention, and engagement
- To increase membership in CEC/CASE (national organization) by offering efficient registration and an awareness of the benefits of belonging to a professional organization

Provide performance-based professional learning

- To build the knowledge capacity of members in order to provide improved services for students with disabilities
- To develop and enhance the leadership skills of new members at all levels of administration by strengthening the pipeline from teacher to director
- · To expand the leadership skills of all members
- To communicate timely, accurate information that will encourage improved services for students with disabilities
- To value the experience and expertise of Past-Presidents and G-CASE-awarded individuals in the design, implementation, and presentation of professional learning activities

G-CASE Visible and Viable at National CASE Conference

G-CASE President Michele Sayles Harris joined National CASE Treasurer Zabrina Cannady, G-CASE Treasurer Damita James, former G-CASE Legislative Chair Jenny Millward, former G-CASE President and now retired National CASE Executive Director, Luann Purcell, G-CASE Executive Director Sarah Burbach, and G-CASE members John O'Connor, Tanisha Brice, and Monica Smith for several days of learning and networking at the National CASE Conference in Pittsburgh. It was so invigorating to meet administrators from all over the nation who are experiencing the same issues as we do in Georgia. Zabrina and Sarah presented a Breakout Session on *Selecting, Developing, and Monitoring Teacher Leaders for Future Administrative Positions in Special Education;* Zabrina, Tangela, and Monica presented *Repurposing with Purpose*, and John O'Connor shared *GREAT Instruction, GREAT Achievement for Students with Disabilities*.



We were honored to have National CASE Executive Director, **Phyllis Wolfram** with us, in person, for the entire Fall G-CASE conference in Savannah in November! Phyllis delivered a keynote presentation and Breakout Session. Georgia is proud to have 279 members in National CASE!

G-CASE Wins National CASE Award!

G-CASE was recognized at the National CASE Board of Directors Meeting in Pittsburgh last month with the *Outstanding Achievement and Exemplary Unit Award...* for our AWARD Program. This award identifies G-CASE, out of all the CASE Units in the country, for sponsoring a variety of award programs at the state and national levels, recognizing the exceptional work and contributions of its members. When bestowing this award, the CASE President shared that we offered a "wide array of awards ranging from outstanding administrator to outstanding *new* administrator, exemplary service, outstanding educator, two scholarships, and a Friend of G-CASE award." He ended the presentation by stating that "G-CASE is meeting their mission with passion." Yes we are!



2023 –2024 Tony Molinaro Scholarship: Attend the 2024 CEC Convention in San Antonio!

Would you like to attend the **2024 CEC International Convention** in San Antonio, Texas, in March? Apply for the *Tony Molinaro Scholarship*! Each year, two \$1,000 scholarships are available for Special Education Administrators, with a preference for one to be awarded to a beginning Special Education Administrator in the first five years of service. This scholarship money will go towards participation in the 2024 CEC Conference (March 13-16, 2024, in San Antonio) and can be used for airfare, hotel rooms, meals, and registration.

Tony Molinaro was an exceptional Special Education teacher and administrator who was the first recipient of the G-CASE Lillie N. Moncus Award for Special Education Administrator of the Year. He died unexpectedly at a relatively young age. In his honor, a scholarship fund was established to enable Special Educators Administrators to attend the International Council for Exceptional Children Annual Convention each year.

Visit this <u>link</u> to nominate a deserving special education administrator...or yourself! <u>Deadline January 12, 2024.</u>



Dr. Zabrina Cannady Receives the Lillie Moncus Special Education Administrator of the Year Award

Dr. Zabrina Cannady received the Lillie Moncus Special Education Administrator of the Year Award at the G-CASE Fall Conference. This award is the highest honor that an experienced special education administrator in Georgia can receive and is presented to an individual with five or more years of experience as a special education administrator who has demonstrated outstanding leadership and service in the area of special education. The *Lillie Moncus Special Education Administrator of the Year* has earned the respect of teachers, students, parents, and fellow administrators.

Zabrina's collogues describe her as an advocate for ALL students, spending countless hours making sure the district meets the needs of the whole child. She has worked with disabled

adults in a day facility, served cational theraroom special teacher, dechair, program coordinator, and assistant dent. She bereer as a MenTechnician
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Reserves. She has served as Treasurer of national CASE, President of G-CASE, and President of GAEL She was a guest author for the Journal of Special Education Leadership. She has won the G-CASE Outstanding New Special Education Director Award, the Jim Puckett Outstanding Educator Award, the ASPIRE Advocacy Award, the Dr. Jimmy Stokes Distinguished Service Award, and the Eli Wolf Advocacy Award. She is the facilitator of the G-CASE Special Education Administrator Development Academy, presents at state and national conferences, and has worked with her team to restore an older elementary school in a community that was in need of revitalization into a student support center available to the entire neighborhood with cooking and technology classes, a food bank, clothes closet with washer and dryer, meals for the community, activities for students in the summer, and many other beneficial supports to help uplift the entire community. Dr. Cannady epitomizes the qualities for this award: resourcefulness, compassion, and professionalism as a leader.



SILERIT AUCTION

The SILENT AUCTION at the Fall G-CASE Conference raised \$33,000 for scholarships to the *Special Education Administrator Development Academy (ADA)!* Beautiful themed gift baskets and special items from our GLRSs, G-CASE members, and sponsors enticed participants to bid...and outbid their friends. G-CASE thanks everyone for making this fund-raising venture such a success for our Academy!



SELDA Participants Honored at Fall Conference

G-CASE partnered with the Georgia Department of Education as co-hosts for the *Special Education Leadership Development Academy* (SELDA) during SELDA Day at the 2023 G-CASE Fall Conference. SELDA participants began their day with a "Legal 101" presentation by Parker Poe attorneys Beth Morris and Reagan Sauls, then lunch provided by G-CASE. Following State Director Wina Low's Keynote presentation to the entire G-CASE audience encouraging them to shine a light on increased outcomes for students with disabilities, professional learning, and continuous improvement, our new directors were called forward to receive a small flashlight from G-CASE to remind them to "let their light shine so brightly that others can see their way out of the dark." SELDA participants were then honored with a fun and filling Charcuterie Social catered by former G-CASE Executive Board member Jenny Millward, sponsored by SES.



GaDOE SELDA Leaders Belinda Tiller and Lynn Holland join G-CASE President-Elect Brad Bowling and Vice-President MaryKay

Berry giving out blue G-CASE flashlights to remind our new directors to "shine their light."

G-CASE Fall Conference Ambassadors

One of the highlights of the G-CASE Fall Conference is the selection of Ambassadors! Under the direction of Larissa Beecher, School Improvement Specialist with Middle Georgia RESA, these nominated teachers "work" the conference from all levels — giving directions, helping with the Silent Auction, taking care of keynote speakers, ensuring that all rooms and technology are prepared for Breakout Presentations, getting sponsors on stage on time, working with exhibitors, helping with door prizes — doing anything and everything to make the conference run smoothly. In return, they are reimbursed for all costs (mileage, hotel rooms, food, parking, etc.) while getting the opportunity to attend and network at Georgia's largest conference geared to special educators.

Thank you, G-CASE Ambassadors!

Larissa Beecher, Captain
Karin Fisher, CEC President
Valencia Leslie, Burke County
Melanie Duncan, Houston County
Elizabeth Hunter, Burke County
Ashanti Cannon, Burke County



Special Education Administrator Development Academy Participants Attend G-CASE Fall Conference



Dr. Jenny Millward, past member of the G-CASE Executive Board and current Executive Director of the National Alliance for Medicaid in Education, led the Breakout Sessions for our ADA participants during the Fall G-CASE Conference. This group of teacher leaders learned Fast Facts and Principles of IDEA, then were joined by Dr. Zabrina Cannady, ADA Facilitator, who led a Leadership Academy based on each participant's results from the StrengthsFinder online assessment.

The next session for the Academy will be January 25th in Houston County. Nationally-known author and School Improvement Consultant (and G-CASE member!) John O'Connor will present GREAT Instruction, GREAT Achievement for Students with Disabilities.



Toombs County Special Educators held a teacher support and professional development meeting with the theme, "Stayin' Alive" in Special Education. Payton Biggers provided an inspirational message for the special educators by sharing her personal life story and her children's book, "Autism Gives Me Superpowers!". Each teacher received a copy of her book and participated in a book signing. Kathleen Tootle, Southeast GLRS Director, and Lucy Floyd, Educational Consultant, provided the framework for Specially Designed Instruction implementation for the remaining school year.



Georgia Association of Educational Leaders 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Provide Adequate Funding and Resources for Georgia's Students

- PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF GEORGIA'S CHILDREN SERVED BY
 GEORGIA'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM by not expanding the
 diversion of public funds to private education institutions through
 vouchers, scholarships, tuition credits, tax exemptions, education
 savings accounts, and other school choice initiatives that are applied
 unequally and unfairly to children and without comparable accountability
 and transparency to the public.
- MANDATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY of private education institutions who accept public taxpayer funds by mandating accountability and transparency equivalent to public schools.
- COMMIT ANNUAL STATE SUPPORT TO INCREASED SCHOOL, STAFF, AND STAKEHOLDER SAFETY by adding an annual categorical grant in the QBE system allotment for school safety initiatives and expenses.
- CREATE A MULTI-YEAR PLAN FOR INCREASED PUPIL
 TRANSPORTATION FUNDING TO LOCAL BOARDS in order to fairly
 address the dramatically growing gap between local cost burdens and
 stagnated state funding.
- PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING FUNDING FOR GEORGIA'S EDUCATORS for literacy, safety, workforce development, STEM/STEAM, and other state-mandated priorities by restoring funding percentages for Professional Development to pre-2003 levels.
- RESTORE RECESSION-ERA AUSTERITY CUTS TO ALL RESA
 ORGANIZATIONS that provide essential professional development
 services to Georgia's educators and essential support for rural school
 systems throughout Georgia.

Provide Qualified Teachers and Leaders to Serve Georgia's Students

- ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO REMAIN IN GEORGIA AND IN THE PROFESSION by supporting and strengthening Georgia's Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and state salary schedule.
- EXPAND EFFORTS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN TEACHERS AND LEADERS to address the growing shortage of quality applicants needed by our children.
- REDUCE THE CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS in Georgia
 classrooms by permitting retired educators in high-needs areas that are
 designated annually by individual school systems to return to work full
 time for children without losing their retirement benefits.
- ENSURE FAIR ACCOUNTABILITY for teachers and school leaders through valid, reliable, and effective measures.

Support Local School Board Authority

- STAND FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE BY COMMUNITY BOARDS OF EDUCATION by ensuring that legislation is aligned with constitutional provisions regarding public school governance.
- ENSURE THAT SUPERINTENDENTS SERVING CHILDREN CONTINUE
 TO BE APPOINTED by locally elected boards based on a leader's training and expertise.

Support the position statements and priorities of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL) Affiliates/Associates.

G-CASE Legislative Committee Co-Chairs Represent You!

G-CASE Legislative Co-Chairs Sean Cooper and Greg McElwee represented G-CASE on the GAEL Legislative Priorities Committee this Fall. They joined educational leaders from the Georgia School Superintendents Association, Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals, Georgia Association of Middle School Principals, Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals, Georgia Association of Curriculum and Instructional Supervisors, Georgia Association of School Personnel Administrators, Georgia Education Leadership Faculty Association, and the Student Support Team Association of Georgia to craft a final list of mutually-agreed upon priorities necessary to improve outcomes for all public school students in Georgia. This final list, which includes adequate funding and resoruces for students, teachers, administrators, and school boards, will be shared with all Georgia legislators during the upcoming legislative session and will be used as our guide as we lobby and speak to bills that reflect these important needs.



Hello, GCASE Members!

I hope this newsletter finds you well and ready for the new year. We have some exciting news and events to share and some opportunities to get involved with our organization. Read on to find out more!

Fall Conference Highlights

We had a great time at the Fall conference, where we learned from experts, networked with colleagues, and had some fun. Thank you to all who attended and made it a success!

- Congratulations to Angela Shoemake, who won the special education trivia contest at our Happy Hour! She received a free GaCEC t-shirt!
- You should hear from our membership committee (Luann Purcell, Tammy Anderson) soon if you filled out our <u>GaCEC District Contact Update</u> form. They will help you stay connected with GaCEC throughout the year.
- If you missed our presentation on the benefits of joining CEC, you can request a copy by emailing me at kfisher@georgiasouthern.edu. CEC offers many resources and opportunities for professional development, advocacy, and recognition for special educators.

CEC Calendar Featuring GaCEC Student Artwork

We proudly announce that a Georgia student has her artwork featured in the CEC 2024 Calendar, showcasing the talents and achievements of exceptional children from across the country. The CEC Calendar is a fundraiser for the Yes I Can Fund, which supports the Yes I Can program that honors students with disabilities every year. By purchasing a calendar, you are helping CEC celebrate the diversity and potential of our students. You can order your calendar by contacting any CEC Officer.

Upcoming GaCEC Events

Mark your calendars for these upcoming events that you won't want to miss!

- PAGE Day on the Hill February 20, 2024. Join us in Atlanta for a day of advocacy and action. We will partner with PAGE to meet with our legislators and share our concerns and needs as special educators. Kelly Standridge, our Child Advocacy Network (CAN) coordinator, will provide flyers with specific information on special education issues. This is a great opportunity to make your voice heard and influence policy decisions that affect our profession.
- CEC Convention March 12-15, 2024. The annual CEC Convention will be held in San Antonio, TX. This is the largest gathering of special educators worldwide, where you can learn from the best, network with peers, and discover new ideas and strategies. We are planning a social event with Florida CEC, and we will let you know the details as soon as they are confirmed. We hope to see you there!
- GaCEC All-Member Meeting June 2024. Save the date for our annual all-member meeting to review our accomplishments, discuss our goals, and swear in our new officers. The exact date and time will be announced later. This is a chance to connect with other GaCEC members, share your feedback, and get involved with our organization.

-GaCEC Continued-

Volunteer Opportunities

We always seek volunteers to help us plan and execute our programs and events. If you want to join our programs committee, please contact *Veronica Crenshaw at gacecvp@gmail.com or fill out CEC's Volunteer Square*. We need your help to provide quality professional development and socials for our teachers statewide. Volunteering is a great way to enhance your skills, expand your network, and contribute to our profession.

Happy Holidays!

We wish you all a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year. We are grateful for your membership and support and look forward to working with you in 2024. Please feel free to contact us with any questions, suggestions, or concerns. We are here to serve you!

Konin Fisher

Dr. Karin Fisher

GaCEC President

Email: kfisher@georgiasouthern.edu

Stay connected with us for updates: CECommunity, <u>GaCEC Website</u>, <u>Facebook</u>, <u>Linktree</u>, <u>Instagram</u>, and <u>X</u>. Written with the assistance of <u>Bing</u>, <u>Microsoft</u>. (2023). <u>Personal communication via chat mode</u>.



Ga CEC President Dr. Karin Fisher and CEC Unit Advisor, Dr. Luanne Purcell, represented CEC at the Georgia Association of Teacher Educators (GATE) Conference

2023-2024 G-CASE Special Initiatives:

Special Education Administrator Development Academy (ADA)

Coordinator Skills Institute (CSI)

SELDA Mentoring Program

Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative

Diversifying Special Education Leadership



G-CASE promotes professional learning

G-CASE Elections: RUN NOW! We Need YOU!

G-CASE is seeking candidates for **Vice-President** and **Treasurer**. The results of the election will be announced during the *Spring Legal Forum* in March. All newly elected officers officially begin their duties at the G-CASE General Business meeting held at the Summer GAEL Conference in July and will be publicly recognized at the G-CASE Fall Conference in November. Please consider nominating individuals (including yourself!) who meet the qualifications for these important offices, as specified in the G-CASE Constitution. The election will be held in February. Voters must be current members of G-CASE.

Article V – Officers / Section 1. Conditions of Office

Council officers must be members in good standing of G-CASE, CASE, and CEC at the time of nomination and election and remain so throughout the term of office.

The positions elected this year, and those officers' responsibilities, are described below. Nominees should be notified of your intention to nominate them in order to determine their willingness to run for office. By providing this information below, you are ensuring that the person agrees to be nominated. <u>It is completely permissible to nominate yourself.</u>

Vice President: The *Vice President* shall be a position of learning the entire organization in order to move into the President position in two years. The Vice President will accede to the office of President-Elect.

Nominee for Vice President

Treasurer: The G-CASE *Treasurer* is an elected position with corresponding elections held in evennumbered years. The Treasurer serves a two (2) year term. The G-CASE Treasurer oversees the accurate reflection of all expenditures and revenues for presentation at meetings. The Treasurer works in collaboration with the G-CASE Executive Director.

Nominee for Treasurer	
Nominated by	

Nominated by _____

Please forward this Nomination Application to G-CASE Past-President, Dr. Tris Gilland, at tgilland74@gmail.com and to G-CASE Executive Director, Sarah Burbach, at sburbach@gael.org by January 12, 2024.

Questions? Contact Sarah Burbach at sburbach@gael.org



Time to Nominate!

2024 Outstanding New Special Education Director Award

Each year G-CASE recognizes a Special Education Director in his/her first three years administering special education programs and/or services who has demonstrated exemplary leadership and service as a special education administrator. This individual characterizes resourcefulness, compassion, and professionalism as a leader. The **Outstanding New Special Education Director** has earned the respect of teachers, students, parents, and fellow administrators. Nominations may be made by an individual or group as long as the nomination originates within the nominee's school system and the nomination form is endorsed by a current active member of G-CASE.

The Candidate must:

- -be a current Special Education Director in his/her first three years administering special education programs and/or services, who exemplifies G-CASE and CASE's ethics, values, and standards
- -be a member of G-CASE and CEC/CASE
- -demonstrate exemplary leadership and service as a special education administrator
- -show care and concern for students and families with disabilities
- -contribute to the field of special education
- -be actively involved in professional and community affairs
- -be recognized as an outstanding leader in his/her local district and/or by the state

Nominations will be accepted until **February 5, 2024**. Please visit the link below for more information and application: 2024 G-CASE Outstanding New Director





A Great JDEA from Bleckley Cunty!

SEA Hosts Special Needs Day at Greene Acres Farm

When Bleckley County Elementary School teacher, Riley Troili, started the SEA "Special Educators Alliance" on Facebook with the motto, "Catch the Wave to Excellence" she had no idea that excitement to build a community of self-contained special needs teachers would be shared by so many.

Troili's desire was to keep the alliance rather small with educators from about five or so counties involved so that the members would be more likely to post and get to know each other. In less than a month the alliance has grown to close to over 50 members from about 15 different counties in the middle Georgia area.

The alliance is in the beginning stages, but members are posting and sharing ideas. Troili stated that she hopes others are enjoying this alliance as much as she is. She added that she has gained ideas from other's posts that she is already implementing in her own classroom.

It is Troili's hope that members will become more comfortable with sharing ideas and will be able to occasionally gather for field trips and community events. Alliance members from 8 counties recently met at Greene Acres Farm in Bleckley County with over 160 students from pre-k through high school attending a "Special Needs Day." Troili is looking forward to future similar events and also plans to host individual groups at her own school's sensory garden which her class started and maintains.

Setting goals, reaching for the stars, and doing what it takes to make dreams come true is what Troili hopes she inspires others to do. She says she is enjoying "riding the wave in this SEA and is so appreciative!"



SOON





Thank You, G-CASE Fall Conference Sponsors!



STAY UP TO DATE WITH G-CASE ONLINE NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE!







GCASE2020

Tania Amerson

Editor Communications Co-Chair, G-CASE Executive Board

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G-CASE serves the members of CASE who live and work in Georgia. Our major goal is to improve services to children with special needs. We strive to provide leadership and support to members by providing input into the policies and practices in Georgia which impact the quality of education and by providing support to the professionals who serve the students of Georgia.