



G-CASE COMMENTS

An Affiliate of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders

President's Corner



Greetings G-CASE Friends!

I am excited to share the first G-CASE newsletter of the 2023-24 school year! Like me, many of you look to G-CASE (your professional organization) to provide professional growth, updates, learning, and networking opportunities to support the work you do for students. You anticipate the guidance provided through our drive-in sessions, fall, and spring conferences. You eagerly await the time to network and brainstorm with your colleagues from around the state so that you can cull ideas to incorporate in your respective districts and implement what works best within your community.

Well, we're close to the fall conference! By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have hosted a drive-in conference in Perry Georgia, designed to fill your toolkit with 504 updates. Then before you know it, we will be flooding the streets of Savannah to hear world-renowned speakers on a variety of relevant topics. Our conference title, "Transforming Transition: PK-12" will showcase the development of a workforce readiness program, nationally recognized speakers, and sessions designed to support you as you serve students across the state.

Life preparation begins before students enroll in school. Therefore, this year's conference is intended to equip you with the tools and ideas needed to develop and explore trends in supporting the development and/or expansion of training opportunities. I hope this year's conference will leave you feeling inspired and motivated.

I thank you in advance for being a member of G-CASE, and for faithfully attending, participating, and contributing to our success. I thank you for the privilege to serve and I cannot wait to see you in Savannah!

Michele Sayles-Harris

Notes from the Executive Director

Sarah Burbach



I am a special educator who loves her acronyms (thank goodness, right?), so I want to devote this column to my BPFs – my Best Professional Friends, all members of G-CASE at one time or another during my last thirty-seven (!) G-CASE years. I was part of Northeast Georgia GLRS's wonderful "Collaborative Community," and I tried never to let anything interfere with our third Thursday meetings at RESA. I learned so much! I carefully watched the directors from large systems in my GLRS expertly handle legal matters, and I learned how to share services (OT, PT, etc.) with the directors of smaller systems. We traded information about ways to teach teachers how to write the perfect IEP (and *always* seemed to discuss what the Perfect IEP *really* looked like), how to budget our proportionate share, Medicaid, and what to claim as excess costs. We knew each director's "specialty" area (i.e., what they used to teach) and would call them with specific questions pertaining to their expertise. I think of collaborative communities as networking at its best! We needed and relied on each other! My BPFs understood my job and my responsibilities better than anyone else because we were all special educators.

So, here's some advice from a special education administrator who has been around awhile: Become best professional friends with other special education leaders. Tap into their knowledge. Learn from their mistakes. Honor their leadership. Observe their behaviors. Study their communication. Share what you know. Join them at conferences for good times and new knowledge. Love their families. Keep them close.



A few "old" special education friends caught up at lunch last week in Athens:

Lynda Hale, (Retired) Oconee County Schools/Special Education Director; then Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Brenda Stancil Dupre, (Retired) Northeast Georgia GLRS Director; then Educational Specialist with Harben, Hartley, & Hawkins

Scott Smith, (Retired) Bartow County Schools/Special Education Director (when we knew him best); Now working with the GaDOE

Susan Trotter, (Retired) Shared Services Director, Northeast GA RESA

Joan Baird, (Retired) Madison County Schools/Special Education Director

Sarah Burbach, (Retired) Morgan County Schools Assistant Superintendent for Student Support and Community Relations; Now Executive Director of G-CASE



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

2023 G-CASE Fall Conference

November 15-17, 2023
The Hyatt Regency, Savannah

Transforming Transition: PreK-12

This year's G-CASE Fall Conference is already getting to be exciting! Our first hotel block of rooms filled up the first day that conference registration opened. We already have a waiting list of vendors wanting to meet you and sponsor the conference, and only have 50 more spaces for participants to register until maximum capacity is reached!

The conference theme, *Transforming Transition PK-12*, will be carried out with special keynote speakers each day, along with updates from the GaDOE, Georgia CEC, and attorneys. We are also delighted to welcome National CASE Executive Director Phyllis Wolfram to Georgia. She will address our General Session on Thursday, followed by a special announcement for CEC/CASE members. Breakout sessions, a Silent Auction (donations raised go toward scholarships for the *Special Education Administrator Development Academy*), Mentor Mingle, SELDA recognition, an ADA Social, Sponsor Give-Aways, GLRS Gift Baskets, and more will allow conference attendees to return to their systems refreshed and re-tooled. This is a conference created just for you and your team!

Register for the 2023 G-CASE Fall Conference [here](#).



2023 G-CASE Fall Conference Breakout Sessions

Join us as we face and embrace current trends and best practices in Special Education and Transition at the **2023 G-CASE Fall Conference** in Savannah! We invite you to share new initiatives or even new “spins” on proven processes and programs that work in your system/agency in order to provide highly effective, positive outcomes for our students.

G-CASE is seeking strong proposals for breakout sessions with a major focus on Transition; however, because successful transition outcomes are not possible without a robust curriculum, specially designed instruction, special programs, funding, assessment, highly trained teachers, etc., proposals for *any* successful, innovative programs will be considered. Preference will be given to proposals highlighting new initiatives and resources that are working and can be replicated in other systems.

Breakout sessions are 60 minutes long and are scheduled for Thursday, November 16th. There is an opportunity to repeat the presentation up to four times, depending on the space available and the quality of the proposal.

Please share what is working in your system!

**The deadline for submitting a proposal is October 1, 2023.
Visit this [link](#) for more information and to submit a proposal.**



2023 G-CASE Fall Conference
Hyatt Regency Savannah, GA
AGENDA

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

Time	Activity
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM	Ambassadors Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

Time	Activity
8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Registration
8:00 AM – 12:00 Noon	Exhibitors Set Up
9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon	SELDA Meeting
9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon	GLRS Directors Meeting
9:30 AM – 10:30 AM	GaDOE/GVRA Focus Group
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	G-CASE Advisory Board Meeting
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	G-CASE Executive Board/Advisory Board Work Session/ Executive Board Regular Meeting
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM	GaDOE/GVRA Focus Group
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Go-504 Pre-Function Session
11:30 AM – 12:45 PM	Pre-Function Lunch Buffet for SELDA, GLRS Directors , and G-CASE Advisory/Executive Boards
12:00 Noon	Exhibits Open/Silent Auction Opens
1:00 PM – 1:30 PM	Conference Kick-Off: Michele Sayles Harris
1:30 PM – 3:00 PM	Keynote: Bill Morris <i>“Focus on Abilities – The Blue Star Recyclers Story”</i>
3:00 PM – 3:30 PM	Exhibit Area Refreshment Break
3:30 PM -4:30 PM	Update from the GaDOE Wina Low, State Director
4:30 PM	Announcements and Adjournment
4:30 PM --5:00 PM	Visit Exhibitors
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Mentor Mingle



Thursday, November 16, 2023

7:00 AM – 8:00 AM	Breakfast Buffet
7:45 AM – 5:00 PM	Exhibits/Silent Auction
7:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Registration Continues
8:00 Am – 8:30 AM	Conference General Session
8:30 AM – 9:30 AM	Keynote: Phyllis Wolfram <i>“CASE Initiatives”</i>
9:30 Am – 10:00 AM	Light Refreshment Break /Tour Exhibit Area
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Keynote: Karen Squires <i>“A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Graduation”</i>
11:05 AM - 12:05 PM	Breakout Sessions A
12:10 PM - 1:10 PM	Lunch
1:15 PM – 2:15 PM	Breakout Session B
2:20 PM - 3:20 PM	Breakout Sessions C
3:25- PM – 3:55 PM	Refreshment Break/Tour Exhibit Area
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Breakout Session D
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	GaDOE/GVRA Focus Group
5:15 PM	Silent Auction Closes
4:00 PM	Exhibits Breakdown
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	ADA Social

Friday, November 17, 2023

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM	Breakfast Buffet
8:30 AM – 8:45 AM	General Session
8:45 AM – 9:15 AM	CEC Presentation
9:15 AM- 10:15 AM	Keynote: Dr. Grant Rivera
10:15 AM-10:45 AM	Break (<i>Check out, pick up Silent Auction items</i>)
10:45 AM-11:45 AM	Keynote: Phil Hartley
11:45 AM -12:00 PM	Door Prizes, Conference Concludes



Support our Fall Conference SPONSORS!

Platinum

SES
Bayes Center

Diamond

Classworks
Goalbook
Marker Learning
Positive Behavior Supports Corporation

Gold

Applied ABC
Presence
The Sensory Room
The Stepping Stones Group
Teach Town
West Georgia University

Silver

Allied Instructional Services
n2y
Parallel Learning

Bronze

ChanceLight Education
Education Associates
Fullmind
Let's Go Learn

Linkit!
The Master Teacher
NWEA
TouchMath

Support our Fall Conference EXHIBITORS

AbleSpace

Abilty2Access

Brainchild

DTA Schools & Clinic

EPS School Specialty

eLuma

Firelight Books

Go Solutions

RoboKind

Springbrook Autism Behavioral Health

**Fees from our Sponsors
and Exhibitors allowed
G-CASE not to raise con-
ference prices this year!**

...and our NON-PROFITS

CEC

Go-IEP

Georgia High School High Tech

Georgia Southern University

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

USTA Georgia

G-CASE/GAEL, GSSA, GSBA, and PAGE Partner

On Educational Budget Priorities for the 2023-2024 Legislative Session

This year, G-CASE/GAEL is working with the *Georgia School Superintendents Association* (GSSA), the *Georgia School Boards Association* (GSBA), and the *Professional Association of Georgia Educators* (PAGE) to present three budget priorities to our local State Representatives and Senators during the upcoming legislative session. Please look them over and share with your staff, Board of Education, and community leaders.



Recommended State Investment to Meet Georgia Student Needs (Condensed)

The Georgia Association of Education Leaders (GAEL), Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA), Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA), and the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) request three priorities be addressed in the 2024 legislative session to improve services to Georgia students and their families.

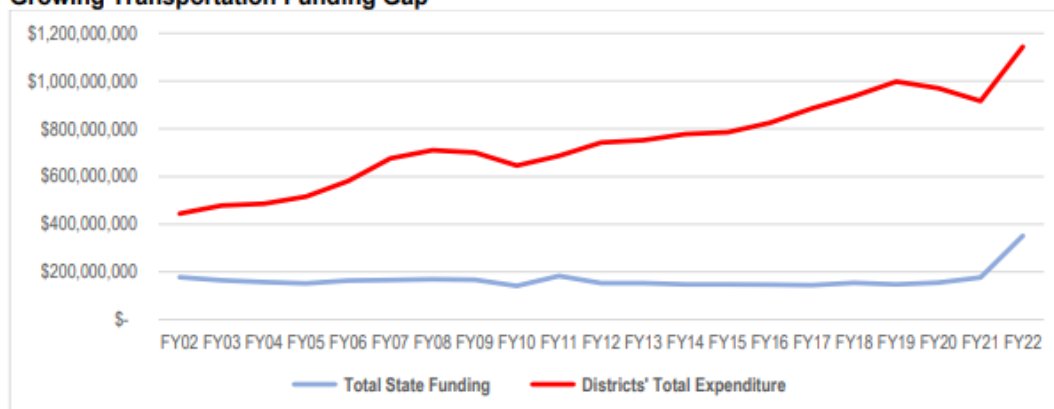
1. **Pupil Transportation:** Increase funding for pupil transportation and develop a plan to bring funding back to the partnership level and boost bus replacement costs.
2. **School Safety:** Provide annual funding for school safety via a categorical grant.
3. **Professional Development:** Restore funding to 1.5% of the base teacher salary and conduct a review of professional development needs and costs.

State investment in these priorities will foster a partnership between the state and local districts that balances the financial commitment of both in these areas and enhances the services provided to students across Georgia.

Priority 1: Pupil Transportation

State funding to transport students to and from school safely has not kept pace with districts' escalating transportation costs, adding significant operational costs to local budgets.

Growing Transportation Funding Gap*



Source: Georgia Department of Education Mid-term State Allotment Sheet, FY2002-2022, School System Expenditure Report, FY 2002-FY2022

*The FY 2022 increase in state transportation funding included a one-time allocation of \$188 million for bus replacement and a one-time allocation of \$28 million for a \$1,000 salary supplement for bus drivers.

The amount the state allocates for bus replacement—\$88,110 per bus—covers the base model, which does not include air conditioning. With average temperatures often topping 85 degrees for several months of the school year in many regions of the state, air conditioning is essential. This is particularly urgent for students in South Georgia where the average high temperature climbs to 90+ degrees in August. Districts often spend \$125,000 to \$135,000 to purchase a bus with air conditioning and extra safety features.

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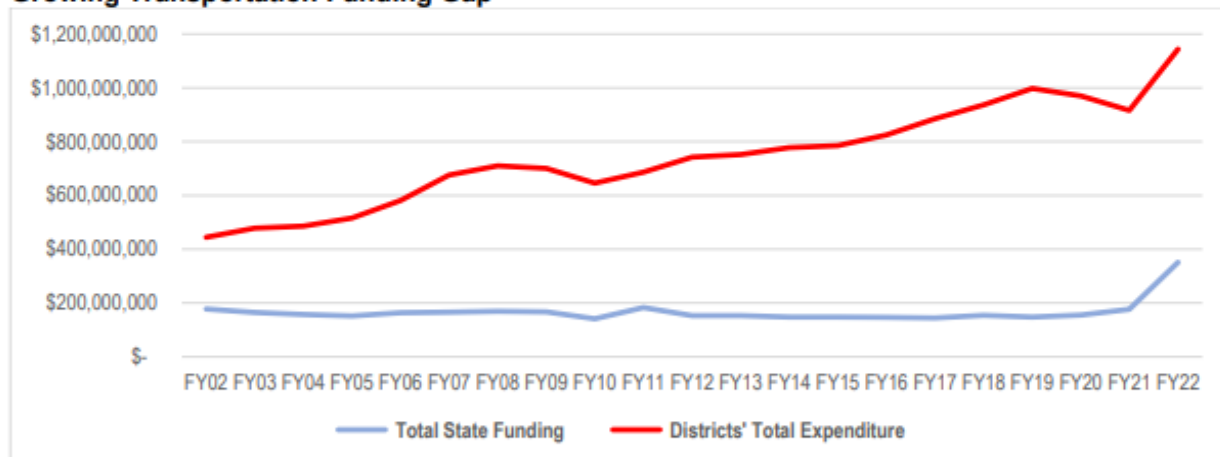
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To view and share this information, please visit this [link](#).

G-CASE Constitution to be Amended following Vote at Fall Conference

During their Summer Retreat, the G-CASE Executive Board voted to amend the G-CASE Constitution/By-laws to better reflect the current needs of our membership. These changes will be voted on by entire membership at the G-CASE Business Meeting during the 2023 G-CASE Fall Conference. Each of the nine (9) levels of membership were clarified, with full retirement and 49% positions detailed, as well as the procedures to handle vacancies on the Executive Board. The nine levels of membership, along with their new definitions highlighted include:

Article III – Membership

Section 1. **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP** shall be available to individuals who hold or are seeking a full-time or retired at 49% position in educational leadership. Professional membership entitles the member to support services targeted to all of Georgia's educational leaders through **regular** memberships in four organizations: the *Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL)*, the *Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)*, the *Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)*, and the *Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (G-CASE)*. Professional membership is the highest membership level offered by G-CASE. ~~In addition, professional members may serve on the Executive and Advisory Boards.~~

Section 2. ~~ACTIVE~~ **REGULAR MEMBERSHIP** shall be available to **individuals who are active educational leaders** employed at least 49% **in a K-12 school system in Georgia**. **Educators at this level** must be members of the *Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)*, the *Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)*, and the *Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (G-CASE)* who administer, direct, supervise, and or coordinate a program, school, or classes of special education for exceptional children in one or more categories as a major responsibility. **Because of the specialized support, professional learning, technical assistance, and coaching for school systems provided by RESAs and the Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS), Regular Membership is allowable for GLRS staff.** ~~and college faculty whose primary responsibility is the professional preparation of administrators of special education.~~ **Active Regular** Membership entitles the member to attend all division meetings, vote on all national and state questions presented to the membership, serve as a committee chairperson, run for national and state office, and be a national or state award recipient. ~~Active~~ **Regular** members may serve on the Executive and Advisory Boards.

Section 3. **G-CASE MEMBERSHIP ONLY** shall be available to individuals (full-time or part-time at 49%) who hold or are seeking a special education/education leadership position but have chosen not to become a member of national CEC/CASE. Active membership in G-CASE ONLY entitles the member to attend all G-CASE meetings and conferences at the G-CASE Member reduced rate, to participate in all surveys and questions presented to the G-CASE membership, to receive the G-CASE newsletters and other G-CASE resources, **to serve on, but not chair, G-CASE committees**, and to vote in G-CASE elections. G-CASE ONLY members are not allowed to serve on the Advisory or Executive Boards or to run for a G-CASE office. All G-CASE members are encouraged to become ~~Active~~ **Regular** or Professional Members.

G-CASE Constitution to be Amended

(continued)

Section 4. **ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP** shall be available to those persons employed by public and private institutions of higher learning, Georgia Department of Education staff, attorneys, and other members of learned professions who are interested in the administration of programs or services for exceptional children, but who are not otherwise eligible for active Regular Membership. Associate Members may attend all division meetings and receive all communications sent to the membership; however, Associates are nonvoting and may neither hold elective office nor serve as committee chairpersons. Associate members are eligible to serve on committees. The cost of an Associate Membership shall be the same as G-CASE Only Membership.

Section 5. **RETIRED MEMBERSHIP** shall be available to a person who has completely retired from their responsibilities and is no longer eligible for active Regular Membership but shall retain all the privileges of active Regular Membership except that of holding elected office unless the person has been elected before the changing of status from active to retired. Retired Members are eligible to serve on committees. The cost of a Retired membership shall be the same as G-CASE Only Membership.

Section 6. **INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP** shall be available to individuals who hold or are seeking a position in educational leadership. Institutional membership entitles the member to support services targeted to all of Georgia's educational leaders through memberships in both GAEL and G-CASE based on current fees.

Section 7. **CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP** shall be available to sponsors, exhibitors, and vendors who desire to keep a presence with G-CASE and to receive G-CASE communications such as newsletters, notices of conferences, etc.

Section 8. **HONORARY MEMBERSHIP** shall be available as a gift to all Past-Presidents of G-CASE. As a result, no Past-President of G-CASE will ever need to pay a G-CASE Membership fee during their affiliation with G-CASE.

Section 9. **SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER LEADER MEMBERSHIP** shall be given complimentary to all teachers participating in the *Special Education Administrator Development Academy*. This one-year complimentary membership allows them a reduced rate at one-day or Drive-In conferences and access to all G-CASE communications and webinars. Members at this level are not eligible to hold office or serve as committee chairpersons.

The full Constitution/By-Laws, with highlighted changes, is located on the G-CASE website at gcase.schoolinsites.com

Ambassadors for Fall Conference: Great Opportunity for Teacher Leaders!

Honor Your Teacher Leaders!

Nominate a Great One as a G-CASE Fall Conference Ambassador!

"G-CASE 2022 was an amazing experience for me as an aspiring leader in the field of Special Education. Throughout my time at G-CASE as an Ambassador, I was able to learn more about the behind-the-scenes work that goes into making a successful conference for educational leaders. Our duties and responsibilities varied from assisting with informative breakout sessions, supporting the needs of keynote speakers, sponsors, and exhibitors, as well as answering questions as needed by all participants. The highlight for me was the opportunity to serve as the facilitator for multiple keynote speakers and listen to their testimonies of all they are doing to promote growth for our students and staff. Relationships were built that will continue for many years to come as we continue to pursue excellence for students in Georgia. Amazing things are happening daily and individuals with a love for education are behind it every step of the way."

-Amanda Boyett, 2022 G-CASE Ambassador

This year, G-CASE will continue the tradition of hosting Ambassadors to ensure that the 2023 G-CASE Fall Conference runs smoothly! Three to four outstanding teacher leaders will be chosen to assist with conference activities such as registration, breakout sessions, Silent Auction, and the exhibit hall. They will join CEC President Karin Fisher and Chief Ambassador Larissa Beecher in providing resources, giving directions, answering questions, and welcoming guests and keynote speakers.

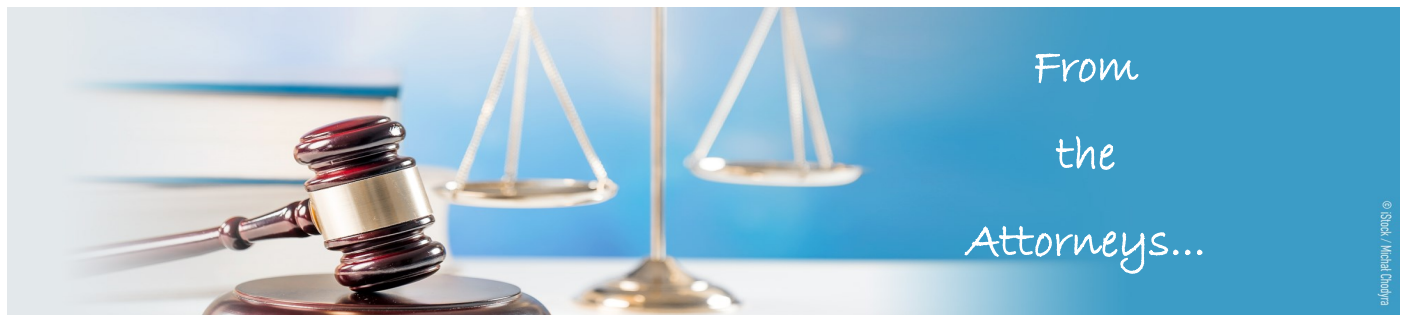
Ambassadors will need to be at the Savannah Hyatt Regency by 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, November 14h, and are expected to stay through the end of the conference on Friday, November 17th. Ambassadors receive conference registration, three nights of lodging (2 to a room), and travel/parking/food expenses. G-CASE does not provide reimbursement for substitute teachers for the Ambassadors.

Your assistance is needed to identify teacher leader candidates for the Ambassador positions. These individuals will be recognized at the conference for their achievements.

**Applications for the Ambassador Position can be completed online at this [link](#):
Deadline for applications is October 3rd.**

For more information about this life-changing opportunity, please contact Dr. Ashly Hunter, G-CASE CEC Representative at ahunter@effingham.k12.ga.us.





From
the
Attorneys...

Using Attendance to Avoid a Child Find Obligation for a School Refusal Student

MaryGrace Kittrell and Reagan Sauls

School refusal continues to be a leading cause of special education litigation across the country and in Georgia. This article will outline how schools can use their attendance systems to avoid a Child Find violation and steps a school should take to evaluate a student once the school suspects the student may have a disability.

Attendance Systems

The beginning of a new school year is a great opportunity to start fresh in monitoring students' attendance and getting ahead of potential school refusal issues for students with disabilities. According to a data collected by Standard University and The Associated Press, students have been absent at record rates since schools reopened following COVID-19 pandemic closures. With increases in absences affecting schools across the country, school districts can put simple systems in place to avoid a violation under the IDEA. The earlier school refusal is detected, the more options available to respond.

At the start of the school year, ensure that schools have a routine system for documenting attendance in real-time and updating attendance if parents provide excusal notices. A common, avoidable issue that arises in due process hearings involving students who experience school refusal is unreliable or inaccurate attendance data. This can be because some teachers are more consistent in reporting absences and tardies than others, teachers do not promptly provide excusal letters to the attendance clerk, or attendance clerks and classroom teachers do not have a strong understanding of what

FROM THE ATTORNEYS, Continued)

is required for a student's absence to be excused. While every situation is unique, many of these situations can be avoided if schools provide training and clear expectations on how to record attendance throughout the school year.

Monitoring Attendance

Monitoring attendance is one of the best steps a school can take to meet its Child Find obligation. Once you have strong attendance systems in place, it is important to decide which school employee(s) will monitor student attendance, how often they will monitor it, and what steps they will take if a student has obtained a certain number of absences or tardies. Designating a school employee to monitor student attendance will ensure that no student falls through the cracks. Some schools or school districts have software that provides automated data on students who have reached a certain number of absences or tardies. These systems can be an excellent tool if schools utilize the information they provide.

If you have not already done so, put a system in place for the attendance clerk(s) to notify the special education administrator in the building of students who are accumulating absences and tardies. As part of this communication system, determine whether absences will be calculated by the number of full-day absences or whether inconsistent attendance in different classes during the school day (at the middle or high school level) will be reported.

Responding to Chronic Absenteeism for a Non-Special Education Student

Once a school becomes aware that a student has accumulated a certain number of absences or tardies, the school should attempt to determine the reason(s) for the students' absences. This information can be useful in determining the cause of the school refusal:

- Does the student miss certain class subjects?
- Certain times of the day?
- Certain days of the week?
- Around test time?

The school should always attempt to communicate with the student's family to determine the reason for the poor attendance. If any of the following are true for the student, it can be a sign that the student's poor attendance is the result of an un-

(FROM THE ATTORNEYS, Continued)

-identified disability:

- Hospitalizations
- Suicide attempts
- Statements of self-harm/loathing
- Perfectionism
- Lack of friends
- Withdrawal/crying
- Sudden drop in work completion/grades
- Difficulty entering the school building
- Increase in requests to leave class
- Increase in requests to contact parents during the school day
- Increase in trips to nurse for headache, stomachache, etc.

If there is any concern that anxiety, depression, or another diagnosis may be the cause of the absences, there should be a determination if there needs to be an “evaluation.” This may be via Section 504 to determine eligibility or under IDEA. Even if the school decides not to pursue evaluation, the school should continue to monitor the student’s attendance and grades.

Best Practices for Evaluating a School Refusal Student

Whether a student’s attendance is sporadic or whether the student is having difficulty entering the school building, evaluators should attempt to do the following:

- Develop rapport with the student before beginning the evaluation.
- Be creative in efforts to evaluate.
- Seek the parents’ input on how to evaluate.
- Schedule the evaluation(s) at a time of the day that has the greatest likelihood of a successful evaluation.
- Seek private providers’ input and information.
- Document all efforts to evaluate.

This can be a long process, if it is delayed due to lack of attendance document the reason for the delay. The ultimate goal is to have as strong an understanding of the student’s functioning as you can while still complying with the deadlines for an initial evaluation.



David L. Lawrence Convention Center

[Register at this link](#)

G-CASE Presentations at National CASE in Pittsburgh!

**Selecting, Developing, and Monitoring Teacher Leaders for Future
Administrative Positions in Special Education**

Presented by Zabrina Cannady and Sarah Burbach

Repurposing with Purpose

Presented by Zabrina Cannady, Monica Smith, and Tangela Brice

GREAT Instruction, GREAT Achievement for Students with Disabilities

Presented by John O'Connor

**Save the Date for Winter GAEL
January 28-30, 2024**





COMING
SOON

COMPLETED

September 20, 2023: Special Education Administrator Development Academy

COMPLETED

September 21, 2032: Section 504 Drive-In Workshop

November 7-10, 2023: CASE Conference, Pittsburgh

November 15-17, 2023: G-CAS Fall Conference, Savannah

December 6-7, 2023: Dyslexia Conference, Lee County*

January 28-30, 2024: Winter GAEL, Athens

January 24, 2024: Coordinator Skills Institute (CSI), Houston County*

January 25, 2024: Special Education Administrator Development Academy

Winter, 2024: Behavior/Mental Health Toolbox 2.0*

March 4-6, 2024: Spring Legal Forum, Athens

March 12-15, 2024: CEC International Convention, San Antonio

***Registration Information Coming Soon!**

Section 504 Drive-In Workshop - A Huge Success!

G-CASE sponsored *A Guide to Section 504 Legal Obligations: Best Practices from Eligibility to Discipline and Everything in Between* as the first Drive-In Workshop of the new school year on September 21, 2023 in Perry, Georgia. Ninety-eight (98) Section 504 administrators spent the day learning with Parker Poe attorneys Reagan Sauls, Mary Grace Kittrell, and Sheneka Lodenquai as they took the group through

- What is Section 504?
- Developing the 504 Plan
- Temporary Disabilities
- Referrals and Evaluation
- Health Care Plans
- Placement
- Tips/Best Practices
- How does it Work?
- Eligibility/Re-Evaluations
- Mitigating Measures
- Medical Diagnosis
- Discipline/Manifestation
- Legal Implications
- Comparison to IDEA





GEORGIA



Greetings GCASE Members!

It has been both a privilege and an honor to serve as the GaCEC President over the past year. As we reflect on the past year's accomplishments and look ahead to the future, I want to extend my gratitude to the dedicated leaders who serve on our executive and governing boards.

In July, our executive board came together for a productive retreat where we laid the groundwork for the years to come. We collectively formulated a vision, mission, and goals that will guide GaCEC's actions and initiatives through 2026.

Our Vision:

High-quality education that is inclusive and equitable for individuals with disabilities in Georgia.

Our Mission:

- Cultivating, supporting, and empowering education professionals who work with individuals with disabilities.
- Advocating for education professionals and for individuals with disabilities and/or gifts and talents.
- Advancing professional practice.
- Promoting diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility.
- Building networks, partnerships, and communities

Our Goals:

1. Develop, engage, and support an effective and diverse workforce of special education professionals.
2. Increase the impact of CEC's policy agenda for education professionals and for individuals with disabilities and/or gifts and talents.

We are excited to use this strategic plan as our roadmap, ensuring that our actions align with our vision, mission, and goals. But we can't do it alone—If you share our passion for creating a more inclusive and equitable education system and want to contribute to our mission, please consider joining a committee or volunteering your time and expertise through CEC's Volunteer Square. I encourage you to reach out with any questions, ideas, or suggestions you may have.

Thank you for your unwavering support, dedication, and commitment to the field of special education.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karin Fisher".

Dr. Karin Fisher, GaCEC President
Email: kfisher@georgiasouthern.edu

G-CASE Partners with the GaDOE for SELDA

G-CASE had the opportunity to meet the 104 SELDA participants at the SELDA monthly meeting in August in Athens. Executive Director Sarah Burbach provided an overview of G-CASE, CEC, CASE, and GAEL, and G-CASE President Emeritus Dr. Zabrina Cannady led an enjoyable leadership activity for the group. G-CASE Advisory Board members from each GLRS will mentor the forty-five (45) first-year directors this year. SELDA members and their mentors will be recognized during the Fall Conference with a special social event, the *Mentor Mingle*, sponsored by SES. Before the conference, Parker Poe attorneys Beth Morris and Reagan Sauls will lead a morning session, *Legal 101*, for SELDA as a Pre-Conference function, followed by lunch. G-CASE values our partnership with the GaDOE as we share professional learning and interactions with this special group!



SELDA Meeting in Athens in August

G-CASE promotes effective leadership

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 Members Attend the CASE Special Education Legislative Summit

Sean Cooper, G-CASE Co-Legislative Chair, and Ashly Hunter, G-CASE Liaison to the Council for Exceptional Children, joined special education leaders from across the nation to advocate on Capitol Hill as a part of the Special Education Legislative Summit (SELS) in July. SELS is a Council for Exceptional Children and Council of Administrators of Special Education collaborative event held annually in Washington, D.C. Educator shortages, mental health, and appropriations were the key issues the state teams shared with representatives on Capitol Hill.



G-CASE Executive Board Members Sean Cooper, Ashly Hunter, and former G-CASE Legislative Chair Jenny Millward at SELS in Washington in July.



G-CASE impacts legislation and policy

Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative Drive-In Workshop

One of the five Special Initiatives of G-CASE this year is to continue to support the **Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative**, a working and learning group that meets virtually once a month. As one of the founders of the Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative, G-CASE members continue to play an active role in this group. Several G-CASE members were invited and participated in both SBOE's Task Force to develop the rule governing SB48, and then the GaDOE's Task Force to refine the Dyslexia Handbook once the State Board of Education passed the rule.

From Tier 1 through Dyslexia: Powerful and Effective Elementary Reading Instruction

(Bringing the new laws, requirements, best practices, and concrete actions together)

A One-or Two-Day Conference

Day 1: An Overview of the Georgia Early Literacy Act, the Dyslexia Legislation, and the Science of Reading

Day 2: Working with Your Team to Develop Strategic Steps

(You must have attended Day 1 here, or a similar John O'Connor training, to attend Day 2)

December 6 (Day 1) and December 7 (Day 2)

9:00-4:00 The Bindery at Oakland, Leesburg, GA

(Near Albany and Dawson)

Registration to Open in late September

Sponsored by
The Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative

Georgia
Dyslexia Collaborative

\$75 per day



Charlette Green Receives the 2023 Phil Pickens Administrator Award

Charlette Greene, Executive Director of Special Education and Section 504 for the Cherokee County Schools, was awarded the **2023 Phil Pickens Administrator Award** at last week's *Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership Kickoff* Meeting in Macon. Charlette is a SuperHero of G-CASE and served as the 2017-2018 G-CASE President.

Special Recognition!

Dr. Damita James Receives the 2023 Jim Puckett Outstanding Educator Award

Dr. Damita James, Assistant Executive Director/GLRS Director for Middle Georgia RESA, was awarded the **2023 Jim Puckett Award** at the GAEL Summer Conference on Jekyll Island. Damita is recognized as a Special Education Leader throughout Georgia. The opportunities she has had for the last 23 years as a special educator have allowed her to teach and lead in various settings, including elementary and high school, Teacher of the Visually Impaired at the Georgia Academy for the Blind, and Special Education Administrator, both in Houston County and currently at Middle Georgia GLRS. Damita has held state and national positions in special education: GaCEC President, CASE-Financial Committee Member, and G-CASE Treasurer. Throughout her educational career, Damita has served on the advisory board for Capella University, volunteered for Special Olympics, and participated as a member of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL). She is also a member of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International (DKG), a national educational organization for women. As part of DKG, Damita serves on the Professional Affairs and Grant in-Aid committees. Damita is a huge advocate for the self-care of educators and believes that we must use our experiences for opportunities for growth. Congratulations, Dr. James!



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.

Kanisha Tripp, Program Specialist for Houston County School District, received one of these two significant scholarships: *This year, I attended the National Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Convention in Louisville, KY. It provided me with an opportunity to grow and learn information from other experts in similar career fields. I learned helpful tips and strategies that can be added to my toolbox as I support teachers and serve students with disabilities throughout my school district. One of the most enlightening learning experiences was the information presented on the ABCs of Leadership. Great leaders possess many positive character traits and can manage complex change. This session allowed me to reflect on my personal leadership qualities and explore opportunities to become a more diverse, well-rounded leader. Additionally, I gained valuable insight on how to embed culturally responsive preventive strategies for supporting students with disabilities. Real life scenarios were presented that can be applied in the school setting, and guidance on strategies for avoiding implicit bias were modeled. As a new administrator, I plan to redeliver all the valuable information to my colleagues and teachers. I am very thankful to have participated in a conference that provides strategies, and tips that can be applied as I fulfill my role as a Special Education Administrator.*

Dr. Kristi-Lee Arrington, Director of Student Services for the Houston County School District, also received the coveted Tony Molinaro Scholarship: *There is no better time than time spent with like-minded individuals making life-long connections! The CEC National conference was held in Louisville, Kentucky in March and was a time for doing just that. Special education teachers from around the country enjoyed all the City of Compassion had to offer, while gathering skills and resources to bring back to their communities. G-CASE, as always, was well represented at the conference this year. The conference started with an inspiring opening session panel discussion regarding the growing focus on mental health needs in the school setting. Although special education teachers have been aware of mental health needs, the pandemic has brought mental health to the forefront. The aftermath of the pandemic and the changing perspective of educators that have now had an up close and sonal look into the homes of their students has forced school districts across the country to take*

(continued)

a personal look into the homes of their students has forced school districts across the country to take action. Educators are now keenly aware of needs beyond the classroom and academics and are ready to arm themselves with the skills necessary to revolutionize public education with wrap around services. The energy of the crowd in the opening session was contagious and this group is no doubt up for the task of EVOLUTION! CEC ensured developing sustainable programs to build mental wellness for students. The Expo was busy while everyone enjoyed visiting with the vendors to see what new products and services were available.

Louisville wasn't all work, and no one knows how to have a great time like a group of educators! There was time to tour distilleries, visit Churchill Downs or the Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory. No matter your taste, there were plenty of options for great restaurants and shopping in Louisville. The trendy NULU district caters to the arts with magnificent wall murals, museums, various ethnic eateries, and boutiques. If hip and trendy isn't your vibe and classic country is more your thing, there were plenty of options for dinner and drinks at 4th Street LIVE. My group enjoyed a bit of both!

CASE hosted a reception at the Ali Center where members browsed the museum and learned about the dynamic life of Muhammad Ali and his desire to impact others through growth and love. It seemed there was no better way to celebrate our mission as special educators than at a center that promotes 6 core principles: Confidence, conviction, dedication, giving, respect, and spirituality. Without these principles we could not be successful in our work.

No matter how you pronounce it, Louisville was a gracious host city and we left renewed and ready to fulfill our purpose in the Evolution ... OR Revolution of education! I am thankful to G-CASE for this valuable experience!

Visit this [link](#) to nominate a deserving special education administrator...or yourself! Deadline November 30, 2023.



Nominations for the G-CASE Lillie Moncus Special Education Administrator of the Year Award

Each year, G-CASE presents the **Lillie Moncus Special Education Administrator of the Year Award** as the highest honor for an experienced special education administrator in Georgia. This award 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 special education. This person characterizes resourcefulness, compassion, and professionalism as a leader. The *Lillie Moncus Special Education Administrator of the Year* has earned the respect of teachers, students, parents, and fellow administrators. This coveted award will be given during the G-CASE Fall Conference in Savannah in November. Nominations may be made by an individual or group as long as the nomination originates within the school system or educational entity (i.e., school district, GLRS, GaDOE, etc.) and the nomination is endorsed by a current active member of G-CASE.

To qualify for this honor, the candidate must:

- ♦ be a current Special Education Administrator with five or more years of experience as a special education administrator
- ♦ be a member of G-CASE
- ♦ demonstrate exemplary leadership and service as a special education administrator
- ♦ demonstrate care and concern for students with disabilities and their families
- ♦ contribute to the field of special education
- ♦ be actively involved in professional and community affairs
- ♦ be recognized as an outstanding leader in their local district and/or the state

***All nomination applications are due to G-CASE Immediate
Past- President Tris Gilland, by October 17, 2023.***

Nomination Link:

[2023 G-CASE Lillie Moncus Special Education Administrator of the Year Award](#)

Special Education Administrator Development Academy:

Learning for LEADING



The third cohort of the *Special Education Administrator Development Academy* (Special Education ADA) has participated in three informative sessions since June. This carefully selected group, culled from many applications of teacher leaders from all over the state, has

participated in The Perfect IEP (*Dr. Tris Gilland*), Shared Decision-Making, Leading by Convening, and Collaboration and Communication with Stakeholders (*Dr. Luann Purcell*), Human and Resource Management of Special Education Programs and Services (*Amy Spicer*), and Data-Based Decision-Making/Accountability Systems (*Dr. Steven Hornyak*). Their next time together will be at the G-CASE Fall Conference in Savannah (with a special Breakout Session on Policy Implementation led by *Dr. Jenny Millward*), followed by a day of “Great Instruction, Great Achievement” with *John O’Connor*, and concluding with culminating projects and graduation at the G-CASE Spring Legal Forum in Athens in March.



Some of the 2023-2024 ADA participants at the
ADA Kickoff Social in June

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



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#GCASE2022



GCASE2020

Tania
Amerson

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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.