



SPECIAL ISSUE

G-CASE Elections

G-CASE Members have the opportunity to vote for the candidates who have been nominated for the roles of **Vice-President**, **Secretary**, and **CEC Representative!** These new officers will assume G-CASE leadership during the Summer GAEL Conference in July. You will be sent information to vote electronically for your choices next week. Voting will take place the week of February 17th and will be closed on Friday, February 22, 2019. Winners will be announced at the *2019 G-CASE Spring Legal Forum* in Athens during the G-CASE Business Meeting on Tuesday, March 19, 2019. Please take a few minutes to study the biographies of each of our candidates. Each one will bring effective experience and strong leadership to our organization.

Candidates for Vice President

The position of Vice President shall be one of learning the total organization in order to move into the President position in two years. The Vice President will accede to the office of President-Elect in 2020 and then to President in 2021.



Dr. Cassandra Allen Holifield is a well-respected educational leader who works in the field of Special Education with an emphasis in Emotional Behavioral Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Learning Disabilities, mental health, and trauma. Dr. Holifield earned her doctorate degree (Ph.D.) from Georgia State University and she currently serves as the Director of North Metro Georgia GNETS. Prior to this job, Dr. Holifield served as the Director of Northwest GLRS, Special Education and English Language Learning Product Manager for Western Governors University, the Emotional Behavioral Disorders Program Specialist for the GaDOE in which she played a pivotal role in bringing PBIS to the state of Georgia, then known as EBIS. Dr. Holifield was also a former EBD and Autism teacher for Atlanta Public Schools in which she piloted the first Autism class at Walter White Elementary for students previously served in more restrictive settings back into a regional program. Dr. Holifield has also had the honor of serving as a Special Education Ambassador to South Africa in 2005. She is a published author of an article and a book, "Using Self-Monitoring to Increase Attending to Task and Academic Accuracy in Children with Autism," and "The ABC's of Response to Intervention & Behavior Next Steps: A Practitioner's

Guide to Implementation.” Dr. Holifield also serves as a part-time Special Education Contributing Faculty member of Walden University. Additionally, she is an active member of her sorority, the Rho Zeta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. Dr. Holifield has over 20 years of educational and behavioral experiences as a practitioner, researcher, leader, and an agent of social change positively impacting the community.



This is **Katie Lowry's** 5th year, as a Special Education Director, and member of G-CASE/CASE/CEC. She was honored to be appointed to the position of G-CASE Executive Board Secretary, in the Summer of 2016, and then elected at the Fall Conference that same year. She is running for Vice-President because “I truly believe in the trajectory that G-CASE has continued to take over the past several years. We have been recognized on a National stage, for our work and commitment to SWD's. I also appreciate the commitment our organization has to serving new Director's as they “wade” through their first years, via the SELDA program, as well as G-CASE's continued commitment through various Ed. Policy initiatives. I desire to take the torch and give back to this organization, which has provided me with a large network of friends (family) that I depend on nearly every day. I would be privileged to continue growing in my leadership journey by applying my passion, and creativity to G-CASE for the next 4 years.”

Candidates for Secretary

The Secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all the meetings of the Executive Board, and all General Business Meetings. The Secretary shall carry on correspondence as necessary in regard to matters as delegated by the President.



Tania Amerson has worked in the field of Special Education since graduating from Eastern Illinois University in 1987. Her experiences include 12 years as a special education teacher, 2 years as an instructional coach for special education, 7 years as an educational evaluator and 4 years as an elementary level special education supervisor. Tania is currently in her second year as Director of Exceptional Education in the Bartow County School System Tania has a passion for serving individuals with disabilities and preparing them to achieve successful post-secondary outcomes. She believes this work starts at a very early age through the collaborative work of teams of individuals dedicated to this common goal.



Michele Bealing Sayles is a 24-year veteran in the field of special education who has served in leadership in various districts within the metropolitan Atlanta area. She is currently serving as the Assistant Superintendent of Special Services for the Marietta City School system. A graduate of Georgia State University, she holds advanced degrees from Clark Atlanta University

and the University of West Georgia. She has participated in numerous leadership activities such as GLIS and Leadership Cobb. She co-chaired committees for civic organizations and has been an active member of CEC since the '80s and an active member of G-CASE for the past 18 years where she has enthusiastically served on the Advisory Board and currently the Executive Board. She is an avid reader, mother of three who enjoys time spent with family.

Candidates for the Representative to the Georgia CEC

The **Representative to the Georgia CEC** shall provide oversight in the area of scholarships. This person shall represent **G-CASE** at all required meetings called by the Georgia Council for Exceptional Children.



Serving G-CASE members as the Council for Exceptional Children representative since 2015, **MaryKay Berry** is dedicated to her profession, working with teachers, administrators, and parents with a focus on meeting the needs of students with disabilities. A graduate of the Liberty University, MaryKay wrote her dissertation focused on the level of support and services that were provided to students with Emotional Behavior Disorders as it relates to their academic achievement. MaryKay learned as a general educator “in the trenches” how important it was to make student-centered decisions about the services and supports that are provided to all students. Serving students in various settings, she was instrumental in developing a culture and community that values and supports inclusive practices. Along with her passion for working with students with disabilities, MaryKay’s interests include providing professional development for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, working with difficult parents and using data to drive instruction. She has served on state committees and presented throughout the state as well as at G-CASE. MaryKay’s passion for her work with students, teachers, and parents supports her goal of meeting the educational and emotional needs of students with disabilities.



Dr. Damita James is a native of Forsyth, GA but has called Warner Robins home for the last 18 years. She received her BS from Georgia Southern University in Special Education with an emphasis in Mental Retardation. She also has an M.Ed. in Instructional Technology from Georgia College and State University, an Ed.S. in Educational Leadership and Administration from Lincoln Memorial University, and a Ph.D. in Special Education Leadership from Capella University. She has been in special education for 19 years, serving as a special education teacher at both the elementary and high school level, and a Teacher for the Visually Impaired at the Georgia Academy for the Blind. She has served as a Program Specialist in the Houston County School District for the last nine years. She has served as the Ellen Maltais Chapter of CEC Chapter Advisor and serves as the Vice-President for Georgia CEC. Students with disabilities have been a life-long passion and Dr. James strives to

ensure that students are the primary focus in all educational decisions. During her off time, she enjoys spending time with her family, reading, watching Netflix, and serving the community through activities such as Relay for Life.

Other Important News for G-CASE Members:



The 2019 G-CASE Spring Conference A Special Education Legal Forum

Monday – Wednesday, March 18, 19, and 20, 2019

The Classic Center

300 N. Thomas Street, Athens, Georgia 30601

*Begins at 1:00 PM on Monday, March 18, 2019
and ends at 12 noon on Wednesday, March 20, 2019*

Featuring

Phil Hartley, Beth Morris, and Reagan Sauls

Harben, Hartley & Hawkins LLP
Gainesville, Georgia

Julie Weatherly

Resolutions in Special Education, Inc.
Mobile, Alabama

Deanna Arivett

Arivett Law, PLLC
(former School Psychologist)
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Jamila Pollard

Program Manager Senior/ Legal Officer;
Family Engagement and Dispute Resolution
Georgia Department of Education

Washington Update

Valerie Williams

Director of Government Relations
National Association of State Directors of Special Education

Plus, Special Updates from
the Georgia DOE by **Dr. Zelfphine SmithDixon**
and
the 2019 Georgia General Assembly by **Dr. Jimmy Stokes**

Two breakfasts and one lunch are included in the conference fee of
\$347 (G-CASE Members) or \$397 (Non-Members)

Early Bird Discount through February 15th
\$327 (G-CASE Members) and \$377 (Nonmembers)

Register Now on the GAEL Website:
[2019 G-CASE Spring Conference Registration](#)

Notice of Intent to Amend Constitution

The G-CASE Constitution, last amended on March 18, 2014, has been revised to reflect current membership year guidelines, the addition of a *Policy and Procedures Committee*, and to correct a few typographical errors. These minor revisions in the Constitution will be presented for amending by a majority vote of the active members present at the G-CASE Business Meeting held during the 2019 Spring G-CASE Legal Forum on March 19, 2019.

