

President's Corner



Greg McElwee

Greetings GCASE members!

Here we are in the heart of our school year and I know you all are working very hard to support your staff and students. It's during this time of year when questions and situations arise that even confuse the most seasoned administrators. When these challenges come along, it's so comforting to have access to a professional organization like GCASE. Please take advantage of this connection, we are all here to support each other and the students of

Georgia. I would like to send a big shout out to our new Executive Director, Sarah Burbach. She is working very hard to continue the success for our organization.

It is hard to believe that our Fall Conference is right around the corner! We are so excited to provide this opportunity for you and members of your staff to come to Savannah and participate. Fall Conference is a time to learn, connect, and share with other individuals from around the state. Our Conference "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" has an amazing line up of keynotes and breakout sessions focusing on relationships and their impact on student achievement.

Again, I want to thank you all for the opportunity to be President of this amazing organization. I am very honored in your trust in me to lead GCASE this year. Please feel free to contact me if I can ever be of assistance. I look forward to seeing you all in Savannah!

-Greg



Fall 2018 Fall GCASE
Conference
Wanna Be Startin'
Somethin'

Savannah, Georgia
November 14-16, 2018

Notes from the Executive Director

Special Education educators in Georgia are so fortunate to have access to an active, professional organization (G-CASE) at the state level, under the auspices of our national association, CASE! I have been a member of G-CASE and CEC/CASE for over thirty years (!), and have learned to depend on this group for providing the majority of my professional learning in "all things special education," especially in the area of professional leadership. I am honored to be a part of a group of administrators who provide "a unified voice for special education students and leaders across Georgia." And... because special education outcomes are so important to ALL stakeholders, being a member of GAEL, the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders, is also a must!

Since most of you have now joined or renewed your memberships for this school year through the convenient registration process for our Fall Conference in Savannah, here are some facts you may find interesting:

- The Membership year for G-CASE and GAEL is from July 1 to June 30 each year.
- The Membership year for CEC/CASE is based on the anniversary date from when your membership check was received.
- G-CASE is an affiliate of GAEL. GAEL is an "umbrella" organization that brings seven educational groups in Georgia together to discuss, learn about, and act on pertinent educational issues. These partners include many of the administrators in your schools and central office: Curriculum and Instructional Supervisors, Principals, School Personnel Administrators, and School Superintendents.
- The relationships between these organizations and our G-CASE is vital to understanding and succeeding in your role as a special education administrator.

I hope all of you are as excited about this year's Fall G-CASE Conference as I am! President Greg McElwee has planned a great one – inspirational and motivating speakers, legal updates, important news from the GaDOE, twenty-one breakout sessions from which to choose, the riverboat cruise at dusk, door prizes, exhibitors, and a few special surprises. There is still time to register for this conference – visit our link today to get away to Savannah to learn, network, and revitalize!

<https://gael.ps.membersuite.com/events/ViewEvent.aspx?contextID=e386dc0a-0078-c84b-c97a-0b3e9d93882b>



Sarah Burbach



2018 GCASE Fall Conference

November 14th through November 16th

Savannah Marriott Riverfront [Link to Marriott](#) (for room reservations)

[Online Registration Link](#)

G-CASE President Greg McElwee has planned a super conference with the theme: *“Wanna Be Startin’ Somethin’”* – Excellent, motivational keynote speakers from across the United States; legal updates, a variety of breakout sessions, GaDOE report, special student opening presentation, awards, exhibitors, and a fabulous President’s Reception...

Several groups will also be meeting on November 14th before the Conference Kick-Off:

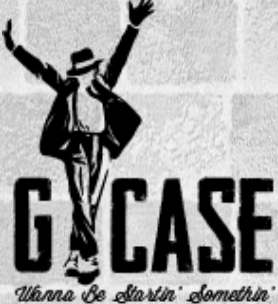
SELDA (8:00-12:00)

G-CASE Advisory Board (9:00-10:00)

G-CASE Executive Board (10:00-11:30)

GLRS (8:00-1:00)

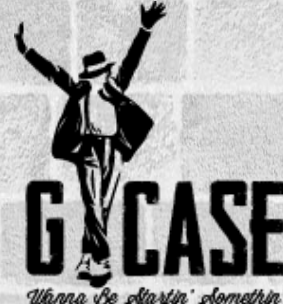
GNETS



2018 Fall G-CASE Conference Schedule

Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'

Marriott Savannah Riverfront
100 General McIntosh Blvd, Savannah, GA 31401



Wednesday, November 14, 2018

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	SELDA, GLRS, GNETS Meetings
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	G-CASE Advisory Board Meeting
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	G-CASE Executive Board Meeting
12:00 PM	Exhibits Open
1:00 PM – 1:15 PM	Conference Kick-Off – Greg McElwee
1:15 PM – 1:40 PM	Student Presentation: Glynn County
1:40 PM – 2:40 PM	Keynote Speaker: Tawana Williams
2:40 PM – 3:15 PM	Exhibit Area Break
3:15 PM- 3:20 PM	CEC President: Mary Kay Berry
3:20 PM--3:25 PM	Distinguished Service Awards (GAEL/CASE, etc.)
3:25 PM – 4:25 PM	Georgia DOE: Zephine Smith Dixon
4:25 P.M.	Door Prizes

Thursday, November 15, 2018

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM	Breakfast/Exhibits
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	G-CASE General Meeting
9:00 AM – 9:15 AM	Lillie Moncus Award
9:15 AM – 10:30 AM	Keynote Speaker – Flip Flippen
10:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Exhibit Area Break
11:00 AM – 12:15 PM	Breakout Sessions A
12:15 AM – 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM – 2:45 PM	Breakout Sessions B
2:45 PM – 3:15 PM	Exhibit Area Break
3:15 PM – 4:30 PM	Breakout Sessions C
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	President's Dinner Cruise Sponsored by TeachTown

Friday, November 16, 2018

7:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Keynote Speaker – Annette Breaux
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Break
10:45 AM – 12:00 PM	Legal Up-Date with Harben, Hartley, & Hawkins
12:00 PM	Conference Conclusion/Door Prizes

2018 Lillie Moncus Award Nominations

Each year G-CASE presents the Lillie Moncus Award as the highest honor for an experienced special education director in Georgia. This award is presented to an individual with seven or more years of experience as a special education director who has demonstrated outstanding leadership and service in the area of special education. This person characterizes resourcefulness, compassion and professionalism as a leader. The Lillie Moncus Special Education Director of the Year has earned the respect of teachers, students, parents and fellow administrators.

Qualifications:

The Candidate must:

- be a current Special Education Director with 7 or more years of experience as a director
- 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

Nomination Requirements:

Nominations may be made by an individual or group as long as the nomination

originates within the school system and the nomination form is endorsed by a current

active member of G-CASE. Nominations must include:

- Completed nomination form (below)
- Narrative detailing exemplary service as a Special Education Director (two page max)
- At least 2 letters of support

Deadline for Nominations: October 26, 2018

Nominations should be submitted by email to:

Charlette M. Green, CAGS, CCC-SLP, ASHA Fellow
Executive Director

Department of Special Education

charlette.green@cherokee.k12.ga.us

2018-2019 Immediate Past President Georgia Council for Special Education Administrators (G-CASE)



Becky Connor (Catoosa County) accepting the 2017 Lillie Moncus Award.

NOMINATION FORM:

Name of Nominee:

School System:

Position:

Work Address:

Email Address:

Work Phone:

Cell Phone:

Number of Years in Education:

Number of Years in Current Position:

Number of Years as a G-CASE Member:

Name of Person Making Nomination:

Email Address:

Work Phone:

Cell Phone:



Each year G-CASE selects six **teacher leaders** to serve as Ambassadors at the G-CASE Fall Conference. These individuals assist with conference activities such as registration, breakout sessions, and the exhibit hall –being available, providing resources and answering questions as needed. In exchange, the ambassadors receive conference registration, up to three nights lodging at the Marriott Savannah Riverfront, and travel expenses.

Ambassadors will need to be at the Marriott Savannah Riverfront no later than 9 AM on Wednesday, November 14, and are expected to stay through the end of the conference on Friday, November 16. G-CASE does not provide reimbursement for substitute teachers for the ambassadors.

Your assistance is needed to identify the teacher leader candidates for the ambassador positions. Please communicate with your region to select a teacher leader candidate for the ambassador position. These individuals will be recognized at the conference for their achievements. Each candidate will complete the online form through the link below.

Application for the ambassador position is completed online through this link:

[G-CASE Ambassador Application 2018](#)

Deadline for applications is October 26, 2018



2020 Vision: Hindsight isn't enough!

Zelphine Smith-Dixon
State Director,
Special Education Services and Supports

In a few weeks, I'll see you at the upcoming G-CASE Conference and get the opportunity to share the current status of our work together. While discussing the state of the state can be critical, it is necessary to establish vision and plan beyond today! As a result of our hard work, what do we want for special education services and supports in the next five years? As we continue to celebrate progress in school completion, we acknowledge the difficult reality to engage students and prevent dropout. Let's continue to examine General Supervision and IDEA Implementation, as well as, move forward for positive results for students.

Legal Update

Faye Maison and Beth Morris
Harbin, Hartley & Hawkins LLC

HIDE AND SEEK IN THE TECHNOLOGY AGE: THE LEGALITY OF GPS TRACKING AND LISTENING DEVICES IN SCHOOLS

"We can't locate her." The words feel like a premonition, déjà vu, the occurrence of a nightmare. Curtis is stunned but not surprised. He knows his daughter has a tendency to "wander," the way he describes it. The objective description is that she is a runner and has a tendency to elope.

At every IEP meeting with her school, her teachers review interventions for this behavior, the ways that they make sure Diana does not have opportunities to leave, and they review the steps they will follow just in case she is no longer in sight. After each meeting, Curtis leaves knowing he covered all his concerns so that his daughter has a comprehensive educational plan. But despite assurances from the school, he always leaves with a sense of anxiety that maybe the school is not doing enough.

"We can't locate her, but we believe she was taken to the restroom with a parapro and will return to class shortly" is what the front office secretary said. Curtis only fixates on the first four words and is immediately compelled to drive up to the school to start looking around, nervous that Diana left the building.

A couple months ago, he purchased a device called GuardianTracker. Every day he attaches the small device to his daughter's waistband. He is the only person who has the key to remove the device, and he is the only person who can access information from the device. At the front office, he opens the GuardianTracker application on his phone. He didn't receive an alert that Diana left the geo boundary he set around the school, which would cause his phone to buzz if Diana left the school's property. He knows that she is in the building. He just doesn't know where – but this is enough to cause him alarm.

Since the device's GPS cannot track a person's location within a building, Curtis uses its listen-in feature to pick up clues as to where in the building Diana is. Curtis has the phone on speaker so that everyone in the front office can help identify where she is. The echo in the background lets everyone know that Diana must be in a restroom, as the secretary said, but they also overhear a classmate proudly explaining to Diana that she is learning to use the bathroom by herself and has not had an accident all week. Relieved, Curtis turns off the listen-in function and waits for his daughter to be brought to the front office.

Concerned, the office secretary tells the school's administration about the incident and how everyone, including the other visitors in the front office, overheard another child discuss her disability. Quickly, the school's administration realizes that this device creates potential problems that they have to figure out.

Technology has the capacity to create a sense of security for parents and guardians of vulnerable students. As the story illustrates, devices like GuardianTracker (a

pseudonym for AngelSense and similar devices), give parents and guardians an increased ability to witness the daily interactions and movements of their children. These devices operate so that the child has no control of when the device is on. An advertised benefit is that children don't need to answer a call or press any kind of button for a parent to listen-in or speak to the child. The device is completely controlled by the person who operates it from afar. However, the emerging abilities that parents and guardians have to monitor their children during the school day creates potential legal issues for these parents and the school district.

Georgia's eavesdropping and surveillance statute makes it unlawful for "[a]ny person in a clandestine manner intentionally to overhear, transmit, or record or attempt to overhear, transmit, or record the private conversation of another which shall originate in any private place." O.C.G.A. § 16-11-62(1). The statute also requires a person to have the consent of everyone involved if that person will "observe, photograph, or record the activities of another which occur in any private place and out of public view." O.C.G.A. § 16-11-62(2). For devices like GuardianTracker to be legal, the person listening in on a conversation or action cannot listen to a conversation that is taking place in a private setting without the consent of its participants. A violation of this statute is punishable as a felony. O.C.G.A. § 16-11-69.

Advocates of these devices contend that they are not violating the statute because schools are not private places. Private places, however, are not defined by the category of a certain location. For instance, a private residence is not automatically a "private place" nor is a park a place where people cannot expect privacy. Private places are defined by a person's expectation in that location. Under Georgia law, a private place "means a place where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy." O.C.G.A. § 16-11-60(3). Therefore, an expectation of privacy can exist in public places, including schools.

Case law confirms that there can be a reasonable expectation of privacy in schools. In Atlanta Independent School System v. S.F. ex rel. M.F., parents of a non-verbal child with autism sewed a digital recording device into their student's clothing to wear to school. The device recorded conversations of other people in the classroom. The parents argued that they had not committed the offense of eavesdropping because classrooms are not private places. The Court, however, determined that although students and teachers could expect that others in the classroom might overhear a conversation, they did not expect that someone outside the classroom heard their conversations. Atlanta Indep. Sch. Sys. v. S.F. ex rel. M.F., 740 F. Supp. 2d 1335, 1358 (N.D. Ga. 2010). Within the boundaries of the classroom, there is still an expectation of privacy. Id.

Continued on page 7

Legal Update Continued

Parents and guardians also cannot claim that their child consented to the use of the device. Minors cannot legally consent to a parent, guardian, or any person listening to a private conversation that the minor is part of. The age of majority in the state of Georgia is 18. O.C.G.A. § 39-1-1. Although there are varying ages for valid consent, like when a minor can consent to sexual intercourse (16) or draft a will (14), there have not been legal conclusions made about a different age of consent for the purpose of telephonic observations. See Kelley v. State, 233 Ga. App. 244, 247, n. 1, 503 S.E.2d 881, 885 (1998). The only time a parent or guardian may record the child with another person is when there is a good faith belief that the recording is evidence that the child was a victim of criminal conduct or that the child was being solicited to be involved in criminal conduct, *while in the family home*. O.C.G.A. § 16-11-66(d). If there is a compelling reason to observe a child's conversations for other reasons, the only person who may consent to the observation of a minor is a superior court judge. O.C.G.A. § 16-11-66(b). There is very little legal authority about "parental wiretapping", but an objective analysis of the statute shows that no person under the age of 18 can consent to the use of a device that allows a parent or guardian to listen-in on their conversations. Id. at 248. See also State v. Cohen, 302 Ga. 616, 636, 807 S.E.2d 861, 876 (2017).

Parents and guardians have tried to advocate for the use of listen-in or recording devices as a service that is required under the ADA and Section 504. Instead of framing the conversation about the use of a listen-in device as an opportunity to simply observe what a child is doing, parents and guardians have tried to argue that these devices provide an "effective communication" service for non-verbal students. Although this argument has not been widely litigated, it has not yet been successful. A couple in Maine was concerned about what was happening to their non-verbal child during the school day. They wrote a letter to school officials letting them know that their child would attend school with a recording device. The device would allow them to know what happened to the child during the school day. The district wrote back indicating that the device could not be worn at school because it violates the personal privacy rights of other students and violates the state wiretap statute.

The parents later claimed that the device was necessary to provide reasonable access so that their child can communicate about what happens at school. They claimed that the recordings were communications made on behalf of the child and that they can use the recordings to advocate for their child in the same manner as his peers without disabilities. Pollack v. Reg'l Sch. Unit 75, No. 2:13-CV-109-NT, 2017 WL 1592264, at 9 (D. Me. Apr. 28, 2017), *aff'd*, 886 F.3d 75 (1st Cir. 2018). The facts of the case showed that the device was not necessary for the student's education or for the student's safety. It was actually found that the device would interfere with the student's education, was not necessary for his safety, and would not benefit his education. Id. Since the parents were unable to establish that the accommodation was necessary to allow the student to benefit from the education programs, it was not reasonable under the

ADA and Section 504.

This article has only focused on the use of electronic devices for observation purposes, not the use of GPS trackers. When a parent insists on using a device with a listen-in feature like AngelSense, it is important to research the device and find out what modifications can be made so that the device can be used in school. There is a high likelihood that potential customers have already raised concerns about legal problems and that the company has created ways to use the device with less liability. It is also critical to keep in mind that the creators of these devices are trying to increase the number of customers and people who use the device. They are often willing to find ways of making the device work for their customers. AngelSense, for example, has an entire section of its website that is geared towards questions about how AngelSense can be used in schools. Due to concerns about the listen-in function, AngelSense has devised ways of allowing the voice features to be off during the school day or allow school administrators to control when the feature can be turned on in school. These modifications may allow the device to be used in school in a manner that will not potentially violate the privacy rights of other students.

But it is always imperative to consider the reasons why parents and guardians are turning to technology. People who want to use these devices will claim that the device is the only way to know what is going on with their student, to help find the student in case of an elopement, or the device allows the parent to speak with the student during the day and help bring a situation under control. Their reasons are understandable, but it is important to think of what the presence of these devices can do to disrupt the classroom environment and the school community. Rather than relying on a device to possibly make a situation easier, it is important to identify the parent's concerns to build trust in the school community and create IEPs that continue to advance the student's education.

For instance, if a parent communicates that his or her student is being bullied on the bus, administrators must take steps to address bullying before parents think it is necessary to use devices to record other students. If a student is disruptive in class and the parent believes they need to call in to get the student on task, administrators need to address how the behavior can be handled with minimal parental intervention. Additionally, if a parent is afraid that their student may elope during the school day, the school must address its security so that students cannot leave unnoticed throughout the day. Getting the root of the concern and addressing those concerns is often a more successful means of reaching agreement rather than simply battling the device itself.

Have a burning legal education question you've always wanted to ask?

Submit your question to Sarah Burbach at sburbach@gael.org and we'll make sure it's answered during our sessions!

(We won't even use your name!)



JOIN US 2018 G-CASE PRESIDENT'S DINNER & DANCE

DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH, 2018



LOCATION:
SAVANNAH RIVER QUEEN RIVERBOAT
DOCKED AT: RIVER STREET (EAST OF HYATT REGENCY)
(COMPLIMENTARY TRANSPORTATION ON THE SAVANNAH RIVER FERRY*)

TIME:
ALL ABOARD!
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

PRESIDENT'S DINNER/DANCE & RIVERBOAT CRUISING
7:00PM - 9:00PM

RSVP: MANUEL FERRER
MFERRER@TEACHTOWN.COM (305) 298-1567

*(SAVANNAH RIVER FERRY RUNS FROM THE MARRIOTT TO THE HYATT. PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU NEED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION)

District Spotlights

*Submitted by Chrissy Owensby
Stephens County Schools
Secondary SPED Coordinator*

Stephens County Student Services is "Startin' Something!" Not only do we desire meaningful family engagement, but we wholeheartedly believe that it is possible! Knowing that a child's first, and most influential teacher, is their parent, and improving the effectiveness of the home as a learning environment is critical to improving long-term school success, our team began brainstorming how to proactively engage families. Like an athletic event, we know we need all players in order to form healthy alliances throughout the school system and community. We began "Startin'" something by initiating, planning and implementing substantive activities. Through collaboration of all stakeholders, we focus on activities and events that contribute to the development of the whole child.

The grassroots team of parents, teachers, paraprofessionals and special education administrators began by establishing our group as the Stephens County School System F.O.C.U.S. Group that is focusing on communities uniting Stephens County. We base our work on a framework developed by Dr. Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University. The six-step process includes parenting (supporting and strengthening families, which, in turn, supports students at school); communicating (effective modes utilized regarding school happenings and student progress); volunteering (recruiting parents to support school endeavors); learning at home (sharing information, ideas and support to build family and school alignment); decision making (empowering others, especially parents, to be leaders); and collaborating with our community (identifying and integrating resources and services to strength school programs, family practices as well as student learning and development).

While this process is continuing to evolve and grow, the current results are quarterly Parent Universities, every other month Parent and Pastries events, a working relationship between the school district and Parent to Parent of Georgia, a Family Resource Fair and, most importantly, improved family engagement that directly benefits each of our children. As we dig in to build and grow even more this year, some of our activities will focus on topics such as transition, navigating Georgia Medicaid, helping teens get a first job, thinking outside the box, and assistive technology. We are also facilitating conversations and relationships that build capacity in parents to grow as leaders to help other parents and families.

While our passion has not negated challenges, we have faced each barrier as a team with a mission to positively contribute to positive and meaningful family engagement. With Lily Tomlin inspiration, "we wondered why somebody didn't do something about that. Then we realized we were somebody." Start something!

*Submitted by Gina Smeeton
Haralson County Schools
Special Education Director*

We are providing Registered Behavior Tech (RBT) training to teachers and paraprofessionals in the district... so far we have two paraprofessional RBT's (with their credentials) and several more going through the process. We are proud to offer this training and the support to our district, especially since it directly supports our PBIS efforts.

District Spottlights

*Wanna Be Startin' Somethin': Best Buddies
Submitted by Elizabeth Holloway
Monroe County Schools*



What are you doing to make sure your district's students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) are included in their school culture, particularly in high schools? Not academic inclusion, but social inclusion. Every kid deserves the experience of Friday Night Football, Homecoming dress up days and dances, Prom, and just to generally get the typical high school experience. Does that always happen for your students? If they go to the games or dances, do they have friends there? Wanna be startin' somethin' might help social inclusion in your district?

When I first got to Mary Persons High School in 2012 the culture was kind and welcoming for all students; there was not an issue with bullying. Nonetheless, my students with IDD had very few opportunities to form friendships with their peers outside of their classes. My students took elective courses in the general education environment but that provided very little opportunity for friendship development. This being our circumstance, Best Buddies was recommended to me by a professor at Georgia College and State University where a College chapter of the club was already thriving. After some research, we started the first High School chapter of Best Buddies International in the state of Georgia.

Best Buddies is an international organization that offers a variety of programs to help individuals with IDD increase their inclusion within the communities. The High School program is student led and aims to match up individuals with and without IDD to help foster genuine friendships. These Buddy Pairs are required to communicate weekly, enjoy two activities per month together, and report their monthly interactions via an online portal. The club plans

one monthly informational meeting (learning about various disabilities, disability rights, and advocacy) and one monthly social. These events are open to all club members but also allow Buddy Pairs to meet their monthly requirements. When a genuine friendship is developed between the Buddy Pair, each individuals' social network grows; that is the goal.

With overwhelming support from our administrators, faculty, student body, and community we're now one of the largest clubs on our campus boasting over 100 members, 12-15 of whom have an IDD, every year since our inception. Over the last 5 years our Best Buddies officers have led school wide Respect Rallies for the Spread the Word to End Word campaign, hosted a community wide Fall Festival, and hosted a community concert, all in addition to at least 2 annual fundraisers, monthly informational meetings, and monthly socials. We have partnered with various school and community organizations for service projects, homecoming floats, and much more! Following our lead, our middle school now has a friendship chapter. In the years since Best Buddies began at Mary Persons organizations in our community have raised funds for and built both an all-inclusive playground and an adapted baseball field. While these things can't be directly linked to Best Buddies, I can say with certainty that Best Buddies' leadership and advocacy in our chapter has led our community to consider the needs of individuals with IDD in ways they never have before!

Most importantly, students have developed genuine friendships that will last beyond

high school and into adulthood. Students without IDD in Best Buddies today will be voting, hiring, and developing policy in the years to come. It is my hope that by developing personal relationships with their peers with IDD now, they'll be positioned to improve the quality of life for their peers with IDD in the future.

Continued on page 11



Best Buddies Continued...



Walking into a room and being known by name is powerful; you can't quantify that type of feeling. Best Buddies has given our students the chance to be seen and to be called by name by their peers. I truly can't say enough about the positive influence Best Buddies has had on the faculty and student body at Mary Persons, my students with IDD and their parents, and the future of individuals with IDD in our community. Best Buddies is most definitely somethin' worth startin'.

If you're interested in bringing Best Buddies to your district, the time has never been better! A board has been established to help bring a state Best Buddies office to Georgia to support as many programs as possible. Contact RyanWirth@bestbuddies.org for more information. Ryan is willing to share the Best Buddies mission and program with anyone who would like to learn more.



Are you or your district doing something amazing?

We want to know about it!

Send submissions and photos to jcarpenter@nwgnets.org so that we can highlight the wonderful things GCASE members are doing across the state!

A+

District Spottlights

*Submitted by Brooke Ramsey
Newton County Schools
Special Education Director*

The Trailblazer Award was created by the Newton County School System Special Education Department as an initiative to recognize and honor school administrators, general education teachers, support personnel, and staff members within our school district that go above and beyond for our students with disabilities. They are nominated by a special education staff member within the school and the Special Education Leadership Team reviews the nominations and selects the recipient. These individuals exhibit patience, compassion, a positive attitude, and a willingness to ensure that all students learn within each classroom setting. They also promote high expectations for all learners and prove "Our Abilities Outweigh Our Disabilities". The 2017-2018 first annual Trailblazer Award was presented by Brooke Ramsey, NCSS Special Education Director, to Ms. Tracey Overby, head custodian, at Indian Creek Middle School.

The Newton County Special Education Department developed the idea of creating a logo and a hashtag to represent the department. Students with disabilities within the district provided drawings that they felt were representative of exceptional students. The drawings were reviewed by the Special Education Leadership Team and one was chosen to be used as the logo for the Special Education Department. The logo and the hashtag are included on emails, newsletters, social media communication, as well as other correspondence sent out from the department. The NCSS Special Education Department hashtag is #OurAbilitiesOutweighOurDisabilities and the logo is as follows:



The NCSS Special Education Department presented logo winner Christopher Potts, student at East Newton Elementary, with a t-shirt including his winning design along with other gifts.



Newton County Schools Continued...

Schools from all over the district, as well as Board of Education personnel, wore blue for Autism Awareness Day.



“Rockin’ Our Socks” for World Down Syndrome Day – Schools from all over the district “rocked” their socks for World Down Syndrome Day.



NCSS Special Education Department celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month by wearing their favorite shades of green! Schools throughout the district participated and posted pictures across social media to support and raise awareness of mental health.



“I am a member of G-CASE, CASE/CEC, and GAEL because....”

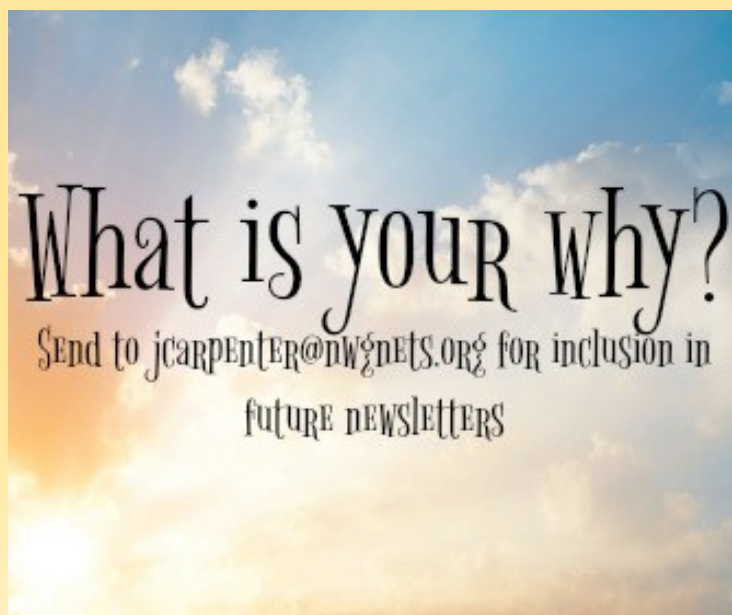
“.... I value the opportunities to learn with and from my colleagues around the state.” (Charlette Green, Executive Director, Department of Special Education, Cherokee County Schools; G-CASE Immediate Past President)

“.... I love being able to collaborate with other professionals across the state of Georgia.” (Leslie Reese, Student Information Services, Lee County Schools; G-CASE Treasurer)

“.....I enjoy the community of professionals with whom I am able to network as a result of my membership.” (Michele Bealing Sayles, Assistant Superintendent Special Services, Marietta City Schools, G-CASE Parliamentarian)

“....I HAVE CREATED A CORE GROUP OF FRIENDS, NO... FAMILY, THAT IS ALWAYS JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY.” (KATIE LOWRY, DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, LUMPKIN COUNTY SCHOOLS; G-CASE SECRETARY)

“....I’m a lifelong learner and these organizations keep me abreast of the latest Special Education research related instructional and behavioral practices.” (Dr. Cassandra Holifield, Director North Metro GNETS, G-CASE Research and Innovation Committee Chair)



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G-CASE Executive Board 2018-2019

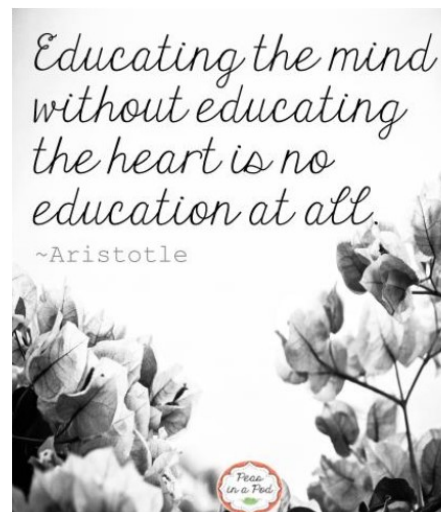
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November 15-17, 2018
 GCASE Fall Conference
 Savannah, Georgia

January 29-February 2, 2019
 CEC Special Education Convention & Expo
 Indianapolis, Indiana

March 18-20, 2019
 GCASE Spring Legal Conference
 Athens, Georgia



Jenny Carpenter, Editor

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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.