



G-CASE COMMENTS

An Affiliate of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders

President's Corner



Tris Gilland

Greetings G-CASE Friends! Happy Holidays!

I hope you all enjoyed (and continue to enjoy) the holiday season. You all truly deserved the break to rest and spend time with your family and friends. I have no doubt that Santa was extra good to all of you!

I want to thank each of you for your participation in our Fall conference in November whether you were with us in Savannah or if you participated in the livestream option. It was so wonderful to see all of you and to continue to learn both with and from you. I hope that you're planning to be in Athens with us for our Spring Legal Conference, March 7th-9th. We are already working on plans for another successful conference -- but we need YOU with us for it to truly be successful. Please mark your calendars as it will be here before we know it!

As always, please reach out if we can do anything to support you in any way. We appreciate each of you and look forward to a blessed and prosperous new year as we are #evenstrongertogether.

Best,
Tris



Notes from the Executive Director

The 2021 Fall G-CASE Conference in November was a success!

Almost 500 G-CASE members participated (348 live and 145 virtual) -- the highest number at a G-CASE Conference ever! The keynote speakers (John Draper, Wina Lowe, Adolph Brown, and Phil Hartley) provided data, timely and useful information, motivation, and gratitude. The breakout sessions offered a little bit of everything (from Dyslexia to Squid Games). Five systems shared their "promising practices" with us and twenty-one vendors highlighted their newest products and programs. We raised over \$1800 for our scholarship program for the *Special Education Administrator Development Academy* (Special Education ADA) and welcomed the very first ADA cohort to our conference. We recognized award winners Dr. MaryKay Berry (Lillie Moncus Outstanding Special Education Administrator), Rosie Gwin (Jim Puckett Outstanding Educator), and Dr. Zephine Smith-Dixon (Friend of G-CASE) in person! And...we celebrated birthdays, as CEC turns 100 and our own GLRS has been around 50 years! We mingled with new directors at the SES-Sponsored Mentor Mingle and ate and danced on TeachTown's Riverboat Cruise. What a wonderful week of learning, networking, and inspiration!



Sarah Burbach

Go ahead and save the date for next year's Fall Conference: November 15-17, 2022, at the Hyatt in Savannah. (We are already planning for it!) See you there!

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Provide Adequate Funding and Resources for Georgia's Students

- FULLY FUND OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM under the QBE formula by eliminating current austerity budget cuts for the FY22 mid-term allotment and the FY23 funding allotment.
- PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE MAJORITY OF GEORGIA'S CHILDREN by limiting the diversion of public funds to private education institutions through vouchers, scholarships, tuition credits, or tax exemptions.
- MANDATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY of private education institutions who accept public taxpayer funds by mandating accountability equivalent to public schools and requiring them to annually post their financial audits, academic progress, and demographic data to the public.
- RESCIND LEGISLATION THAT ELIMINATED FLEXIBILITY for the Early Intervention Program (EIP) that was permitted under current Charter and Strategic Waiver School System (SWSS) contracts in Georgia.
- PROVIDE EQUITABLE BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS for ALL Georgia families by legislating and funding a ten-year strategy targeting rural and low wealth communities.
- BUILD SAFE AND POSITIVE LEARNING CLIMATES by revising the QBE funding formula to increase the number of counselors, school nurses, school safety professionals, and mental health professionals earned per student in Georgia schools.
- INVEST IN SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES (RESAs) to support rural school systems and to maximize collaboration and training for all Georgia school systems.

Provide Qualified Teachers and Leaders to Serve Georgia's Students

- ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO REMAIN IN GEORGIA AND IN THE PROFESSION by supporting and strengthening Georgia's Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and state salary schedule.
- EXPAND GEORGIA'S "TEACHER PIPELINE" INITIATIVE by creating additional incentives to obtain teaching credentials and enter the profession.
- REDUCE THE CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS in Georgia classrooms by permitting retired educators in high-needs areas to return to work full time without losing their retirement benefit.
- ENSURE FAIR ACCOUNTABILITY for teachers and school leaders through valid, reliable, and effective measures.

Support Local School Board Authority

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

Support the position statements and priorities of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL) Affiliates and Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA)

G-CASE Represented at National CASE Conference in Little Rock

G-CASE was well-represented at the National CASE Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas November 10-13, 2021. President Tris Gilland, President-Elect Cassandra Holifield, and Executive Director Sarah Burbach joined G-CASE Past-President/CASE Treasurer Zabrina Cannady for three days of "all things special education" from the national perspective. G-CASE member John O'Connor was also at the conference, asked by CASE to sign copies of the new second edition of his book *Great Instruction Great Achievement for Students with Disabilities*. Highlights of the conference included the day and a half-long CASE Board of Directors meeting and informative keynote speakers and presentations. The group was especially excited to hear Dr. Adolph Brown -- one week before he spoke at the G-CASE Fall Conference; and visit with vendors who were on their way to the G-CASE Fall Conference from Little Rock.

(Pictured: Past-President/CASE Treasurer Zabrina Cannady, G-CASE President Tris Gilland, G-CASE President-Elect Cassandra Holifield, and G-CASE Executive Director Sarah Burbach at the CASE Conference in Little Rock with Dr. Luann Purcell, former CASE Executive Director.)



COORDINATORS' SKILLS INSTITUTE CSI-WINDER

G-CASE continues to provide valuable, timely, and needed Professional Development to our members! Based on the success of the Special Education Administrator Development Academy (Special Education ADA) designed for teacher leaders interested in moving into higher special education positions, G-CASE is now planning to reach the next level of special education leaders - Coordinators, Program Managers, and Specialists.

G-CASE will be offering a Drive-In Conference in Winder, Georgia (about 30 minutes from Athens) geared to the Coordinator(s) of Special Education (and/or special education administrative staff under the Director) in your system. Originally scheduled for January, the current plan is to host this one-day conference in early May.

Please help us offer the topics you would be interested in this group learning more about by completing this very quick (less than one minute!) survey (click [HERE](#)).

Look for more information about this important training in the next few weeks.
Thanks so much for supporting your staff and G-CASE!

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G-CASE continues to be appreciative to the
Sponsors and Exhibitors of the 2021 Fall
Conference who provided valuable and needed
information about their products, programs,
and services. If you would like more
information about these important partners to
G-CASE, visit their websites.

G-CASE MEMBERS APPOINTED TO SBOE DYSLEXIA TASK FORCE

G-CASE, along with other partnering organizations that comprise the year-old *Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative* (GAESP, SSTAGE, GASP, GO-SSLP, and teacher/educator representatives), has made public comments to the State Board of Education each time a draft SST/Dyslexia Rule has been presented. A new Task Force has recently been appointed to develop a comprehensive rule, in accordance with SB48, in an effort to improve awareness, instruction, identification, and evaluation of students who exhibit signs of dyslexia. G-CASE members asked to serve on this State Board of Education Task Force include John O'Conner, Todd Williford, and Sarah Burbach. The first meeting was held December 13th, with the group hearing from three of the pilot systems and discussing other aspects to be included in the rule.



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY (Special Education ADA)

What a group of learners learning for leading!

The first cohort of the new *Special Education Administrator Development Academy* has experienced a wonderful year working and learning together. This group of carefully selected teacher leaders has met six days over this school year. They will continue with a session in January, followed by three days at the Spring Legal Forum, during which time they will present their culminating projects to the G-CASE membership. The January meeting will be led by former national CASE Executive Director Dr. Luann Purcell and will cover seven important topics that future special education leaders need to know:

Collaboration and Communication with Stakeholders in Special Education:

- Shared Decision-Making
- Leading by Convening

Equity and Cultural Responsiveness in Special Education Programs and Services

- Inclusive Practice
- Advocacy for Special Education
- Professional Organizations

Vision, Mission, and Direction Setting

- Evaluation for Program Effectiveness
- Strategic Planning

Carol Seay will present FTE, Budget, and Data 101 to this group during the *Spring Legal Forum*.

Information about the application process for the 2022-2023 group of strong teacher leaders will be going out in late January. Watch for it!

PLEASE

SAVE THE DATE

Special
Education
Legal Forum



The Classic
Center
Athens, Georgia

March 7-9, 2022

Registration and hotel block opens
at the end of January



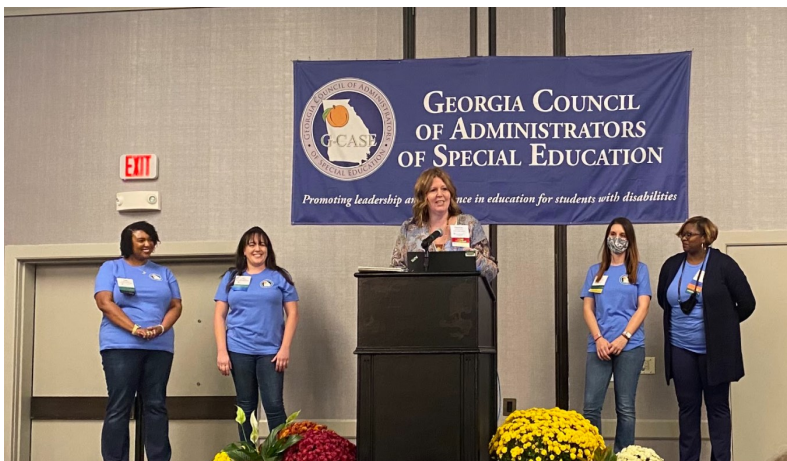
Dr. Damita James
GaCEC President



November started the kick off to the holiday season and we had such a great time at the GCASE conference in Savannah. As president of GaCEC, I had the honor to serve as an ambassador for the conference and to meet such wonderful people. The highlight for me was the opportunity to serve as the facilitator for Dr. Adolph Brown as he met many of the GCASE attendees and listened to your stories of struggle, pain, and triumph. It was indeed an honor to witness this interaction. As Dr. Brown shared, this is the season for us to “extend grace to others”-this includes yourself. What a great season to share your love and light!

Fall Conference Ambassadors!

Each year, G-CASE selects teacher leaders through an application process to serve as **Ambassadors** at the Fall Conference. These individuals assist with conference activities such as registration, breakout sessions, special activities, working with our sponsors and exhibitors, assisting keynote speakers -- being available, providing resources and answering questions as needed. In exchange, the Ambassadors receive conference registration, three nights lodging at Conference Headquarters, all travel and meal expenses, and a week full of *all things Special Education* to remember!



G-CASE elected CEC Representative Dr. MaryKay Berry introduces our Conference Ambassadors.

Congratulations and Special Thanks
to our 2021 G-CASE Fall Conference Ambassadors!
Damita James/Larissa Beecher (MGRESA/GLRS), Tasha Bowen (Marietta City), and Alex Foster (Marietta City)



DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

SUBMITTED BY: SUZANNE KORNGOLD, DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
OCONEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The OCHS football team is excited to host Victory Day 2021 in honor of our special fans! The event will begin with a short meet/greet of the OCHS football team and coaches. Then the students will participate in a short “game” where special needs students are paired with a member of the football team! The event will end with students going through some practice “drills” with team members. The OCHS Band and OCHS Cheerleaders will be on hand cheering and supporting the teams! Any other spectators/parents are welcome free of charge.



School Victory Day brings students together

On a warm, breezy night in September, the Warrior Stadium opened its gates for the return of Victory Day. It was a wonderful evening for all who came out.

Due to COVID-19 protocols, Oconee County High School was unable to hold Victory Day last year, thus creating more excitement and anticipation for this heart-warming event.

Weeks of planning from OCHS coaches and students went into creating this unique experience. Students across football, cheerlead-



Emma Grace Halleck
Young Scholar

ing and marching band all took part to help make it a success.

Victory Day is an event whereby special needs students of all ages take to the field and participate in practice drills and a modified scrimmage alongside the cheerleaders

and football players. The Warrior's very own football announcer, Ben Bridges, is the emcee and commentator. This creates a night of absolute fun for everyone and is an unforgettable experience.

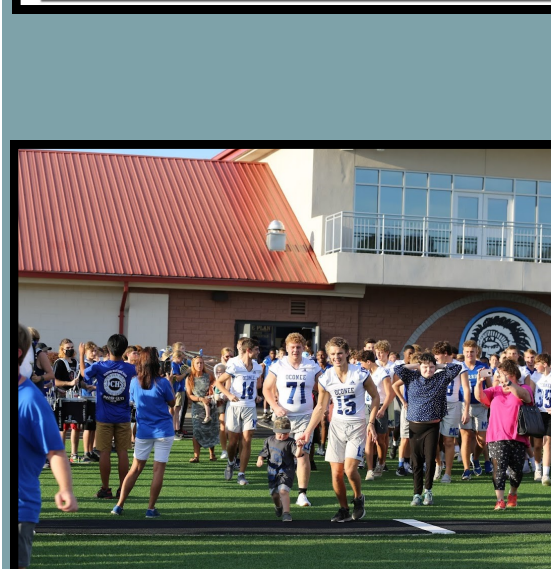
The evening begins with students running out of the locker room with the football players, ripping through a painted break-through banner and under a tunnel of pom-poms as they make their way onto the field.

The OCHS marching band plays pep songs, such as the “Imperial March” and “We Will Rock You”

during the practice drills and scrimmage. Students are invited to grab a pair of poms and join in with the cheerleaders or run to the endzone for a touchdown. The atmosphere is high-spirited and full of energy.

The evening closes off with a group picture to remember this special night with anticipation of next year's Victory Day.

Emma Grace Halleck is a senior at Oconee County High School.



Spotlight on Riley Troili Special Education Teacher Bleckley County Schools

Submitted by: Dr. Cindy Felkins, Director of Student Support Services & Assessment, Bleckley County Schools



Members of the Bleckley District Special Education Leadership Team recently had the honor of presenting a segment for Promising Practices at the annual 2021 Fall G-CASE Conference held in Savannah November 17-19th. Conference attendees viewed a video showcasing Mrs. Riley Troili and her class at Bleckley Elementary School. Mrs. Troili and her class also attended the conference during

the segment and passed out blessing bags to the delight of the attendees! It was a very special and memorable event at the conference!

Mrs. Riley Troili has held various roles in education in the past 19 years: substitute teacher, special education paraprofessional and special education inclusion teacher. In 2017, Mrs. Troili was a little reluctant to accept a position as teacher in a self-contained special education classroom at Bleckley Elementary but she quickly realized it was exactly where God wanted her to be! She had found her niche and true calling. Mrs. Troili is an inspiration who pours her heart into the individual needs of her students daily. She researches different ways to address the sensory and educational needs of her students and works with their families to enhance school-to-home communication. Two years ago, Mrs. Troili began "Jitterbug Joe's" Coffee Cart with her class to begin teaching them healthy social interactions as well as general life skills. The coffee cart helps the students with executive functioning skills, math facts, proper ways to handle food along with other important communication and social skills. The whole school loves the coffee cart and enjoys interacting with those smiling faces every Friday! Last year, Mrs. Troili worked to develop a sensory garden which serves the entire elementary school and her own students benefit because she uses the garden to help bring science to life! The students are able to grow and care for produce throughout the year then reap the reward when the plants are harvested. The entire school enjoys the peaceful environment of the garden as many are able to enjoy a reading break outside. It is also a safe space for students who may need to calm down when feeling overwhelmed. In 2020, Mrs. Troili was awarded the East Central GLRS Special Educator of the Year Award. Riley was nominated by her peers across the district.



Bleckley Special Education Leadership Team with Mrs. Troili and Class
at Fall G-CASE 2021

Continued on Next Page...



Bleckley County Schools Continued...

This award was most appropriate because she is exceptional at what she does. In November 2021, Mrs. Troili won second place in the annual state-wide GLISI Hidden Heroes campaign because she changes the lives of her students daily and blesses her peers. Without a doubt, Mrs. Troili goes above and beyond for her students and their families and we are blessed to have her in Bleckley! Mrs. Troili never seeks recognition; however, she



Riley and her coffee cart crew at BCES



Riley's sensory garden at BCES comes to life...

Do you want to see the great work your district is doing highlighted in the next newsletter? Email your submissions to jcarpenter@nwgnet.org

2021 Fall G-CASE Exhibitors

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HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY

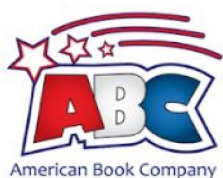
G-CASE is grateful to each GLRS for all they do for the students and educators across Georgia! They provide beautiful, creative gift baskets for conference door prizes, donations to the Silent Auction, conference breakout presenters, Advisory Board members, and SELDA mentors. G-CASE values our strong partnership throughout the year.

Thank You, Sponsors!



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G-CASE Fall Conference
November 17-19, 2021
Savannah, Georgia



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Dr. Jennifer
Carpenter

Editor
Communications Co-Chair,
G-CASE Executive Board

jcarpenter@nwgnet.org

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.