



G-CASE COMMENTS

An Affiliate of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders



From the President: Dr. Cassandra Holifield

Diversification of the Special Education Leadership Workforce Task Force Report

(Dr. Holifield served on this national CASE Task Force)

Many years of research on Disproportionality have pointed to the inequities in education for students of color, students from impoverished backgrounds, and students with disabilities. These disparities are very apparent when examining discipline data and special education enrollment. “Significant Disproportionality” is a term typically used to describe an extensive practice of identifying certain students from racial and ethnic groups for special education services who are then placed in more restrictive settings and disciplined at significantly higher rates than their same age and grade level peers from non-minority groups. These concerns have plagued our special education profession for years and various theories have been formulated as to the what’s, why’s, and the how’s on how to address the root causes of disproportionality so all students with special needs are identified and provided services in a more equitable manner.

A major area that has recently garnered more attention that relates to disproportionality is the lack of diversity in the special education leadership workforce when examining disproportionality and other areas. Therefore, the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) has committed to support the building of the special education leadership workforce that is fully representative of the students and families we serve in special education.

(continued on page 2)

From the President: Dr. Cassandra Holifield *(continued from page 1)*

CASE has committed to engaging in challenging conversations that are necessary to create substantive change required to diversify the CASE organization, board, committee structures, and membership. CASE understands that diversity encompasses racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender, sexuality, ability, socio-economic status and religious identity.

As of September 2021, the 14-member Executive Committee is 100 percent White. However, the lack of racial diversity is a glaring indicator of the depth of the problem. The Diversification of the Special Education Leadership Workforce Task Force (DSEL-TF) Report is divided into three sections. The first section, CASE and CASE Subdivision Unit Membership. This section is critically important in considering special education leadership. The next section focuses on PreK-12 and reports on findings and recommendations related to school districts' efforts to create diversity of thought in the special education leadership workforce. The third and last section of the report focuses on the changes needed to support the network of special education leaders. The findings and recommendations of each section are worthy of thought, courageous conversations, and action. The full report can be accessed on the GCASE website and through this link:

[Diversification of the Special Education Leadership Workforce Task Force Report](#)

GAEL Winter Conference

January 22–24, 2023

The Classic Center, Athens

Join G-CASE President Dr. Cassandra Holifield and GAEL President Dr. Zabrina Cannady with hundreds of other educational leaders in Athens in January! We all need to go to **Winter GAEL** to learn best practices, network, and build a stronger voice for public education! Register today!

Registration: [Winter GAEL Conference Registration](#)





From the Executive Director: Sarah Burbach

We are so excited by the number of G-CASE members who signed up to serve on a G-CASE Committee during Fall Conference! Each committee will meet virtually at least one time before our Spring Legal Forum in

March, with the chair of each committee bringing back recommendations to the Executive Board at their meeting on March 6, 2023. Whether you are already passionate about the committee subject, want to learn more about it, or just want to be a part of something wonderful, taking part on a G-CASE committee is a fun and informative way to get involved in something BIG with a group of people who will become your best professional friends!



2022-2023 G-CASE Executive Board

And...serving on a G-CASE Committee, Advisory Board, or Executive Board prepares you well to serve as an elected officer for G-CASE! This year we will be voting for our next G-CASE Vice-President, Secretary, and CEC Representative. Be thinking now of yourself or someone from your area who would be great to fill one of these opening positions. Remember that the Vice-President becomes the President-Elect, then the President of G-CASE over three years. It is an important position and set up so that by the year the person becomes President, he or she will be able to transition smoothly right into the job! A special call for nominations will be coming out soon. G-CASE wants you! G-CASE needs you! And, as always, G-CASE will be right there for you! Supporting each other is what we do best!

Want to learn more about joining a G-CASE Committee?

Contact Sarah Burbach at sburbach@gael.org

Get Involved! Join a G-CASE Committee!

Communication (Co-Chairs Kitty Crawford and Tania Amerson)	Serves as a conduit for information flow to G-CASE membership
Professional Learning (Chair Todd Williford)	Promotes excellence in leaders by providing timely and needed professional learning
Strategic Planning (Chair Cindy Felkins)	Guides the development, implementation, and revision of the G-CASE Strategic Plan
Membership (Chair Tonya Plant)	Promotes membership in CASE at the state and national levels
Legislative (Co-Chairs Sean Cooper and Greg McElwee)	Facilitates positive action to influence rules and legislative changes
Research & Innovation (Co-Chairs Carrie Powell and Jenny Rooks)	Evaluates and conducts state-of-the-art research-based activities in special education leadership
Policy & Procedures (Chair Jimmy Pitzer)	Facilitates written G-CASE policies and pro- cedures reflecting current practices

Responsibilities of Committee Members:

Attend a live or virtual committee meeting in the Fall and Spring, contribute to the committee with ideas and support, and promote G-CASE membership and activities. Learn more and sign up today at the G-CASE Exhibit table!



TRENDING NOW: 2022 Fall G -CASE Conference

We learned, we laughed, we discovered, we appreciated.

This year's G-CASE Fall Conference set the TREND with its focus on behavior, mental health, legal issues, diversity, and equity. Over 500 educators joined over 50 sponsors and exhibitors to sharpen their skills from nationally-known speakers, while also learning from each other.

Dr. Ben Springer taught us that *Happy Kids Don't Punch You in the Face*, Dr. Laura Riffel addressed *Anxiety and Stress in the Post-Pandemic Classroom*, Wina Low led us in *Setting the Trend*, Dr. Mary Hemphill shared the importance of creating student stakeholders with the *One Minute Meeting*, and Phil Hartley closed out the conference with *A General Review of School Law for a Very Special Group of Administrators*.

Then there were the 40 unique Breakout Sessions that featured national, state, and local special educators; two ADA sessions led by Dr. Jenny Millward; a special SELDA presentation (Special Education Law) and Mentor Mingle; pre-conference sessions for GLRS directors, G-CASE Advisory and Executive Boards; awards; the G-CASE Business Meeting; and 35 exhibitors who came from all over the nation set up to share their latest programs and equipment.

What a way to have started off the Thanksgiving holiday!

To access the presentations that were shared with us, please visit the G-CASE Website at: [Fall Conference Presentations](#)



And the award goes to.....

Debbie Puckett from Pulaski County

***2023 Lillie Moncus
Outstanding Special Education Administrator***

Debbie Puckett from Pulaski County was honored as the 2023 Lillie Moncus Outstanding Special Education Administrator during the 2022 G-CASE Fall Conference in November. Debbie has served as a special education teacher, lead teacher, special education director, assistant superintendent, and now superintendent. Her colleagues state that she is a special educator “to the core” and that serving students and families has been her passion. Her rapport with students is legendary. She communicates effectively in the most stressful situations. She is always willing to learn more. Every meeting, every conversation begins with what will the student’s life look like after high school and what can be done to ensure that this child is successful? Debbie is fearless. She is never afraid to be honest with a parent, teacher, or administrator. Her expectations are high but not unreasonable. She listens. She is professional, creative, and willing to solicit the ideas of others. “Quite simply,” her nominator writes, “she is amazing! Her character is what makes her a true success.”



G-CASE Partners with the GaDOE to Welcome SELDA to Fall Conference

G-CASE got the opportunity to host SELDA (Special Education Leadership Development Academy) at the recent Fall Conference. Over sixty participants arrived at the conference early to hear a morning pre-conference session on *Special Education Law 101* presented by Beth Morris and Reagan Sauls, Legal Counsels with Parker Poe, followed by lunch sponsored by G-CASE. SELDA members, their mentors from the G-CASE Advisory Board, and members of the Executive Board were also treated to a “Mentor Mingle,” sponsored by SES, the first night of the conference. G-CASE is proud of the new directors and our newest members!



The G-CASE Advisory Board, comprised of one representative from each GLRS, serves as Mentors to first-year directors participating in SELDA.

G-CASE appreciates the beautiful themed gift baskets provided by GLRS at the Fall Conference used for Silent Auction items and Door Prizes.

Thank you, GLRS!





G-CASE COMMUNICATES!

G-CASE has once again been recognized by national CASE with the **2023 Communication Award!** This means that Georgia-CASE is the BEST out of all CASE states and provinces in the nation in communicating with our members! The award was announced during the Board of Directors meeting at the national CASE Conference in Salt Lake City in November and was accepted by G-CASE President Dr. Cassandra Holifield, President-Elect Michele Sayles-Harris, former G-CASE President and CASE Treasurer Dr. Zabrina Cannady, and G-CASE Executive Director Sarah Burbach. The G-CASE Communications Committee is co-chaired by Kitty Crawford (social media) and Tania Amerson (Newsletter). Congratulations!



Time to Nominate!

2023 Outstanding New Special Education Director Award

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

The Candidate must:

- be a current Special Education Director in his/her first three years administering special education programs and/or services, who exemplifies G-CASE and CASE's ethics, values, and standards

- be a member of G-CASE and CEC/CASE
- demonstrate exemplary leadership and service as a special education administrator
- show care and concern for students and families with disabilities
- contribute to the field of special education
- be actively involved in professional and community affairs
- be recognized as an outstanding leader in his/her local district and/or by the state

Nominations will be accepted until **February 5, 2023**. Please visit this link for more information and application: [2023 Outstanding New Special Education Director Application](#)



2022 G-CASE Outstanding New
Special Education Director

WHO WILL BE NEXT?



Greetings from Your Georgia CEC President:

It was an honor to serve as an ambassador and meet so many of you at the G-CASE! Conference! First, I want to update you on our 22-23 goals for CEC:

Goal 1: *We will increase our membership by 5% by May 2023.*

- Our membership has increased by 13 (1.7%) since 8/15/22. Our membership has grown by 8 since GCASE! If you are not a [CEC member](#), you can still join using our **50% off** new member code: **GACEC22MEM** The code is only good until 12/31/22!
- To help reach this goal, our board recently approved the reimbursement of startup fees for new divisions and chapters! Contact any board member for details.

Goal 2: *We will increase communication and collaboration with all current members by offering support and resources at least twice a month on the Ga [CECCommunity Board](#) by May 2023.*

- In the last 3 months, several executive board members have posted 8 times! We need to increase member engagement on the board. Please consider using this tool to reach all 732 GaCEC members.

If you want to help us reach our goals, please contact me to join a committee or sign up on CEC's [Volunteer Square](#). As I mentioned at GCASE, we could not host a 2023 summer conference due to the lack of volunteers. We do not have an executive director. We are all volunteers and can use your help in many areas, including hosting a summer 2024 conference, hopefully back at Epworth.

Exceptional Children's Week will take place March 6-10th. The theme is "*The Power in our Differences*." Details on the annual student contest will be posted on our [website](#) soon.

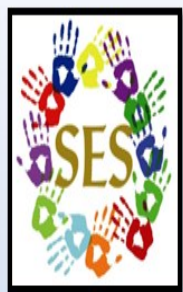
Lastly, if you are looking for holiday gifts for your staff, the 15% off discount code: **GACEC22** for the [CEC store](#) is good until **12/31/22**.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

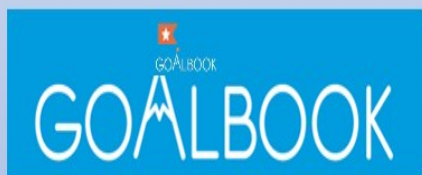
Happy Holidays!

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

Support our G-CASE Fall Conference Sponsors!



Thank you,
G-CASE Fall Conference Sponsors!



Coming Soon!

January 19, 2023 2nd Annual Coordinator Skills Institute
The Annex Auditorium, Houston County

January 20, 2023 Special Education Administrator
Development Academy (ADA)
The Annex Auditorium, Houston County

March 6-8, 2023 G-CASE Spring Legal Forum*
The Classic Center, Athens

April 24, 2022 LEArn and LEAd with Julie Weatherly*
The Annex Auditorium, Houston County



COORDINATOR SKILLS INSTITUTE (CSI)

SECOND ANNUAL ONE-DAY DRIVE-IN CONFERENCE

JANUARY 19, 2023

9:00A.M.—4:00 P.M.

HOUSTON COUNTY ANNEX AUDITORIUM

1600 MACON ROAD, SUITE A

PERRY, GA 31069

Possible Topics based on Coordinator Surveys:

FTE/Maximum Earnings Round 2; Budgets; GNETS; The Perfect IEP/ IEP Meeting/Eligibility; Assessment; FBA; BIP; Discipline Rules; Alternative Schools; ISS/OSS; Incarcerations; DJJ; Manifestation Determination; How to Talk to Parents and Administrators about Students with Behavior/Mental Health Issues; Disproportionality.....

REGISTRATION

Georgia's Dyslexia Rule Passes: Next Steps

The new State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.39 *Dyslexia Identification and Support* was passed by the SBOE at their August, 2022 meeting. Since the passage of the new rule, the GaDOE has established a Dyslexia Task Force to work on the following:

- Screening for Characteristics of Dyslexia
- Dyslexia Parent Handbook
- Statewide Dyslexia Professional Learning
- Dyslexia Informational Handbook (MTSS, Intervention, English Learners, IDEA)

Several G-CASE members have been invited to serve on this Task Force and are excited about the prospect of working with other disciplines, agencies, and organizations (GaDOE, ESOL, SLPs, Teaching and Learning, parents, general and special educators, SBOE members, RESA Specialists, College and University Professors, School Psychologists, specialized Private Schools, Teachers, SSTAGE, Clinical Psychologists, etc.). Systems will be able to enter into the 2024-2025 school year with many resources to serve our students with characteristics of Dyslexia in the best possible ways!

The **Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative**, of which G-CASE is one of the founding member organizations, will be hosting a two-day training on February 1 and 2, 2023 at the Oconee County Civic Center.



Dyslexia Conference [Registration](#) and Information

GAEL/Affiliates Adopt 2023 Legislative Priorities

Sean Cooper and Greg McElwee, Co-Chairs of the G-CASE Legislative Committee, joined GAEL President Zabrina Cannady, former GAEL President Candy Norton, and representatives from each of the GAEL affiliates to establish Our 2023 educational priorities to share during the Legislative Session beginning in January.

The major themes of our priorities include:

- Providing adequate funding and resources for Georgia's students,
- Providing qualified teachers and leaders to serve Georgia's students, and
- Supporting local School Board authority

Let these three major themes serve as the foundation for *your* platform as you share with your legislators during the upcoming session.

Provide Adequate Funding and Resources for Georgia's Students

- **PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE MAJORITY OF GEORGIA'S CHILDREN, WHO ARE SERVED BY PUBLIC EDUCATION**, 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.
- **COMMIT TO INCREASED STUDENT, TEACHER, AND STAKEHOLDER SAFETY** by adding an annual categorical grant in the QBE system allotment to help support increased safety on campus.
- **PROVIDE VITAL MENTAL HEALTH, ACADEMIC, AND CAREER SUPPORT FOR GA STUDENTS** by decreasing the student to school counselor ratio.
- **ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADDRESS THE GROWING GAP** between the costs to LEAs of safely transporting students and the amount of state funding for those costs.
- **RESTORE AUSTERITY CUTS FOR REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES (RESAs)** to support rural schools 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 EFFORTS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN TEACHERS AND LEADERS** to address the growing shortage of quality applicants needed by our children.
- **REDUCE THE CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS** in Georgia classrooms by permitting retired educators in high-needs areas that are designated annually by individual school systems to return to work full time for children without losing their retirement benefits.
- **ENSURE FAIR ACCOUNTABILITY** for teachers and school leaders through valid, reliable, and effective measures.

Support Local School Board Authority

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

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

G-CASE Well-Represented at National CASE Conference

What state at the CASE Conference won a prestigious national award, had two different Breakout Sessions approved and presented to national audiences, sent five CASE members, and was represented on the CASE Executive Board? **Georgia-CASE (G-CASE)!**

G-CASE Executive Board members Dr. Cassandra Holifield, Michele Sayles Harris, Dr. Brad Bowling, and Sarah Burbach joined CASE Treasurer Dr. Zabrina Canady in Salt Lake City, Utah for the National CASE Conference November 7-11, 2023. G-CASE became a very strong presence at the conference with the addition of Dr. Damita James (G-CASE Treasurer), John O'Connor (G-CASE member and former SSTAGE President), and Dr. Jenny Millward (former G-CASE Executive Board member and now Executive Director for the National Alliance for Medicaid for Education) G-CASE was well-represented throughout the week!

The theme of the conference was *"Facing the Future Together"* and featured keynotes by Joe Beckman (Human.Connecton.Matters), Dr. Lori Desautels (The Developing Brain and Body and How Adversity Impacts Well-Being), an expert legal panel led by Julie Weatherly, a Town Hall Meeting with OSEP Director Valerie Williams, and a session on Great Instruction Great Achievement led by our own John O'Connor. A bonus was to get to meet with the many vendors, sponsors, and exhibitors at the CASE conference who were on their way to Savannah the next week to participate in the G-CASE Conference! They couldn't wait to get to sunny Savannah and be with our directors, again!



G-CASE Invited to Share Information about the Special Education Administrator Development Academy Nationally!

Even though it was scheduled for the last Breakout Session of a long day at the national CASE Conference in Salt Lake City, participants stayed well past the ending time to continue to ask questions and learn more about the **G-CASE Special Education Administrator Development Academy (ADA)**!

Presenters Dr. Zabrina Cannady, Dr. Cassandra Holifield, Dr. Brad Bowling, and Sarah Burbach kept the crowd engaged as they shared the development of the Academy – from identifying the need and ideal candidate to the application process/agenda/timelines/curriculum/speakers/and cost, followed by pictures of the Culminating Projects presented at the G-CASE Spring Legal Forum, “Graduation,” and the Five-Star Evaluation. The session ended with a description of the pipeline for new special education leaders (ADA, CSI, and SELDA, sponsored by the GaDOE). Directors from across the United States exchanged their contact information so they could learn even more about this important, needed, and successful venture!



G-CASE Fall Conference Ambassadors!

Each year, CEC selects teacher leaders through a robust 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! What an honor to be selected as a G-CASE Ambassador! Applications for next year will be sent out in the September G-CASE newsletter.

Congratulations to our 2022 G-CASE Fall Conference Ambassadors!

Larissa Beecher (Captain), Karin Fisher (CEC President),
Lee Anne Avery (Houston County), Tammy Anderson (Irwin County),
Amanda Boyett (Decatur County), and Amy Fleming (Bartow County)



“Modernizing Your Mental Health/Behavior Toolkit” **G-CASE Fall Drive-In Conference a Huge Success!**



Over one hundred forty special educators, counselors, and administrators gathered in Houston County in October for a practical, hands-on learning experience designed to assist all educators in *modernizing* their behavioral toolkits. Veteran educators from Houston County, along with Sean Cooper, Director of West Georgia GLRS, shared useful, workable, effective interventions to help establish rapport, de-escalate behavior, and maintain a healthy classroom culture throughout the school. Each participant left the conference with new ideas and strategies, along with an actual behavior “toolkit.”



SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS:

In November, the director, school psychologist and lead teachers from the Bleckley County School System attended the Fall G-CASE Conference in Savannah. The event was packed full of relevant professional learning and enjoyed by the whole group! They were able to participate in 28 of the 54 fantastic breakout sessions offered and have plans to redeliver the information presented.



Bleckley County invited neighboring districts to attend a Ghost Tour one evening while at the G-CASE Fall Conference. Members from Dodge and Wilcox counties joined in the fun. A great time was had by all! What a great way to collaborate with our neighbors in special edu-



Pictured: (Top row) Stephanie Vickers, Cindy Felkins, Jennifer Edwards and (Seated) Becky Kirkpatrick, Danette Rogers, Kelli Lassiter and Sommer Howell

SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS: Oconee County Schools

Oconee County students at Malcom Bridge Elementary School proved that being pampered can be a multi-sensory learning experience! A team of OCS and RESA teachers, therapists, and related service providers from GLRS Region 5 exemplified full-team collaboration as they planned and carried out the **Sensory Spa Day**. This fresh and personalized take on a day at the spa had six treatment stations specifically designed with students' interests in mind to target embedded learning opportunities. Students contributed to their spa treatments through their motor, communication, visual, auditory, and literacy skills.



SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS: Pulaski County Schools

Charlie Harris is a 10th grader at Hawkinsville High School in the Pulaski County School District.

Charlie has always had the desire to play football. With encouragement from Shane Williamson, Principal, and Head Football Coach, Charlie took a chance to be part of the football team.



He also cautiously took Drama as an elective. School staff closest to Charlie were nervous about how he would respond to tasks and interactions he would encounter as a part of football and drama but are thrilled that he has found the courage to reach outside of his comfort zone. Mrs. Borders, the Drama teacher, and sponsor for the One Act Play have provided a safe, encouraging environment where he feels comfortable participating. Charlie has found that same level of acceptance and security with the coaches and his fellow football teammates.

A notable difference can be seen in the way Charlie carries himself. Lynn Freeman, Charlie's teacher has observed increased confidence and emerging leadership skills. She also reports that his classroom performance has shown improvement. Charlie's reading inventory scores have increased dramatically. "His personality shines and he now always has a smile on his face." Mrs. Freeman states that the change has been very impressive. It is truly amazing what a little bit of self-confidence and a sense of belonging can do for performance.

As educators, we often forget how important extra-curricular programs are for our students. It has truly been a joy to watch him grow!

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



@GeorgiaGCASE



#GASE2022



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.