

## President's Corner



Tris Gilland

Happy Fall Y'all!! I sure hope this newsletter finds you all well. I know that you all are worn down from trying to make sure this school year is off to a great start – regardless of how different things are right now. Please know -- not only do I understand your struggles, I am praying for each of you as you continue to push through to lead your teams, your schools, your communities, and most importantly, your students. Even though it may not seem like it, your resilience, determination, and grit, do not go unnoticed.

While I am sad to share the news that we will not be together for Fall Conference this year, I also fully understand the need for everyone to stay safe. I have no doubt that we will make up for lost time when we are able to gather again. In the interim, G-CASE is continuing to work to plan alternative opportunities for you. If you completed the survey Sarah sent out a couple weeks back, we heard you and we are putting your suggestions into action! We've already met with Dr. Smith-Dixon to continue the very powerful partnership G-CASE has with GADOE so expect some very timely and meaningful opportunities to be coming your way.

You all are the heart of our very special organization and we are here to support you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at any time if there's anything I, or G-CASE, can do to help you. After all, we are **#strongertogether**.

What an honor it is to serve as your G-CASE President this year! I can't wait to see all of your beautiful faces very, very soon!!

Best,

Tris



## Notes from the Executive Director

What an exciting (and essential!) time to be a member of G-CASE!

Your \$50 membership has been well-spent and well-received. Within weeks of school closings in March, G-CASE sent out a Special Edition COVID-19 newsletter detailing implications for special education. We passed along the free national CEC/CASE webinars and resources during the remainder of the FY20 school year, and even offered several sessions geared to our own Georgia members. We partnered with the GaDOE and hosted three "Collaborative Conversations" with our State Director, Dr. Zephine Smith-Dixon. Nationally-known keynote presenter (he's a featured speaker at the national 2020 CASE Conference in November) and long-time G-CASE member John O'Conner taught over 180 Georgia special educators workable ways to "Strengthen Virtual Instruction for Students with Disabilities" in two timely and supportive webinars right before school started. Recognizing G-CASE's responsibility to provide opportunities for our members to explore culturally relevant and responsive approaches to creating safe and welcoming classrooms for all students, G-CASE presented a three-part series of introspective webinars "Cultural Relevance and Responsiveness" during August and September, with the culminating webinar to be October 27<sup>th</sup>. We are proud to have offered each of these professional learning opportunities at no cost to G-CASE members because of the critical nature of the topics.

And there's a lot more to come! We are planning monthly one-hour webinars throughout the school year based on the topics you suggested in our recent Fall Conference Survey. And speaking of that survey, thank you, all, so much for completing it! We had a record number of responses from our membership, and your survey answers led our Executive Board to make hard decisions about Fall Conference.

G-CASE is proud to continue to advocate for you!




Sarah Burbach

# Hello my name is

## Meet Our 2020-2022 G-CASE President: Tris Gilland

Dr. Tris Gilland currently serves as Director of Compliance in the Services for Exceptional Children Department for Fulton County Schools. Tris completed her Ed.D. in School Improvement in 2019 at the University of West Georgia. She also maintains her certification as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. In her 21 years working in the field of education, Tris has experience as a Special Education Teacher, Autism System Resource, and Behavior Specialist in Douglas County as well as Special Education Director in both Carroll and Fulton Counties. She previously served on the G-CASE Executive Board as Legislative Chair (2013-2018), Vice-President (2018), and President-Elect (2019). Tris is very excited to continue working with the members of G-CASE to improve Special Education services and supports for all students in Georgia. She is very appreciative of the many friendships she has acquired through working with G-CASE and looks forward to future fellowship with each of you.

Vice-President  
President-Elect  
President  
COVID-19  
Repeat



### G-CASE Executive Board Approves a "Do-Over" Year

Closings and cancellations because of COVID-19 have led the G-CASE Executive Board to make the one-time decision to allow all elected officers to remain in their positions through FY22. No election for new officers will be held this fiscal year. This extension was granted to allow officers the opportunity to work with their committees on upcoming projects that were postponed, to plan face-to-face conferences, and to attend national CASE and CEC conventions to gather information about national trends in special education, share ideas with administrators from across the United States, and to hear a variety of presenters that may be well-suited for Georgia-CASE conferences.

# G-CASE AWARD WINNERS

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### G-CASE Wins National-CASE Award: Communication



2020 CASE Executive Director Luanne Purcell with 2019-2020 G-CASE President Zabrina Cannady, 2018-2019 G-CASE President Greg McElwee, and Executive Director, Sarah Burbach.

Georgia-CASE was announced as the winner of the Communication Award at the CASE Board of Directors meeting before the CEC International Conference in Portland, Oregon, in February. G-CASE Immediate Past-President Greg McElwee accepted the award on behalf of G-CASE. G-CASE was singled out for this national honor based on our in-depth quarterly newsletters and frequent communications with our members via email. (Zoom and other types of virtual communications had hardly been heard of at that time!) Congratulations, Dr. Jenny Carpenter, G-CASE Communications Chair, for the excellent behind-the-scenes work to ensure that our newsletter is filled with timely, useful information!



Dr. Jenny Carpenter  
Editor, G-CASE  
[Comments](#)

### 2020 Jim Puckett Outstanding Educator Award



Dr. Jenny Millward

Dr. Jenny Millward, Director of Student Services for the Houston County Schools, is the 2020 Recipient of the **Jim Puckett Outstanding Educator Award**. This honor goes to individuals who personify the leadership qualities modeled by GAEL's third Executive Director, Dr. Jim Puckett – showing significant achievement in the field of educational leadership and making important contributions to GAEL and G-CASE. Dr. Millward serves as Co-

Chair of the G-CASE Legislative Committee and has represented G-CASE and GAEL exceptionally well in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. This award has always been bestowed at the Summer GAEL Conference at Jekyll Island, but this year it was announced through the weekly GAEL Flyer and at a called G-CASE Executive Board virtual meeting where Jenny was surprised by her superintendent, family, friends, and peers. Congratulations, Jenny!

### 2020 National CASE Early Career Special Education Administrator Award

Our own Dr. Brad Bowling, Director of Special Education for the Barrow County Schools and chair of the Professional Learning Committee for G-CASE, has been recognized by National CASE with the 2020 Early Career Award! This award is the highest honor a new (in the first five years administering special education programs) Special Education Administrator can receive, and G-CASE couldn't be more proud! In



Dr. Brad Bowling

order to best nominees from across the nation, Ontario, and British Columbia, Brad had to demonstrate leadership consistent with CASE Standards, make significant innovative contributions to special education and/or quality of services to children with exceptionalities, and be accomplished and recognized in other educational-related and community leadership roles. Brad was to receive his award this November at the National CASE Conference in Salt Lake City, but CASE will now honor him virtually. G-CASE announced Brad's win during a virtual Executive Board meeting with his superintendent, family, colleagues, and peers all zooming in to surprise and celebrate him. Congratulations, Brad!



# G-CASE Fall Conference in Savannah CANCELLED

It was with heavy hearts that the G-CASE Executive Board made the decision to cancel our Fall Conference to be held in Savannah in November. Based on the excellent response we received from our members and partners to our survey, fears of social distancing for a crowd our size, along with travel restrictions, budget concerns, and being out of the office for an extended length of time, led the Board to vote to not have the conference this year. G-CASE was able to work with the Hyatt Regency, our conference site, to have the 2020 contract rescinded.

The mission of G-CASE is to encourage leadership in professional organizations (G-CASE, CEC, CASE, GAEL), to provide advocacy to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, and to provide professional learning for our members. Even though Fall Conference has been canceled, G-CASE is not abandoning you! We need each other now more than ever!

Based on the Fall Conference Survey results, G-CASE is creating strategies to meet these needs. Plans are already being made to "super-size" the Spring Legal Forum, to be held in Athens (March 8-10, 2021) to include superior keynote speakers and some of your favorite traditions from Fall Conference.

G-CASE is also finalizing plans to stay connected with members by continuing to provide useful, timely, and needed professional learning throughout this school year. We will be hosting a series of monthly one-hour webinars focusing on the issues that were cited the most frequently of the 300+ topics identified by G-CASE members on the Fall Conference Survey. (The fact that over 300 topics were listed on the survey reveals the continuing great need for specialized professional learning for leaders of special education in Georgia!). This webinar series is being scheduled to kick off in November, around the time the Fall Conference would have been. Details about these critical webinars will be shared soon. You cannot miss these one-hour a month focused professional learning opportunities specifically geared to meet the voiced needs of Georgia's administrators of special education!

## G-CASE 2020 SPRING LEGAL CONFERENCE



## Congratulations Dr. Zabrina Cannady

**Your money is safe!**

G-CASE's Immediate Past-President Zabrina Cannady has been appointed to the Executive Board of GAEL as Treasurer and has also been elected Treasurer of National CASE! Her selection as Treasurer of GAEL leads her to ascend to the position of President-Elect and then President of GAEL in 2022-2023. Her term as Treasurer for National CASE will be for two years.

G-CASE is proud to have Zabrina represent us as an officer in these two important organizations!



2020-2021 GAEL Officers:  
Zabrina Cannady, Treasurer; Richard Bazemore, President; and Jesse Davis, Past-President.  
Not pictured: Claire Buck, President-Elect

G-CASE  
mourns the recent  
loss of  
  
Chris Horton  
  
G-CASE President  
2010-2011



# EXECUTIVE BOARD

## 2020-2021

G-CASE Position	Executive Board Member	System/Agency
President	Tris Gilland	Fulton County Schools
Past President	Zabrina Cannady	Houston County Schools
Emeritus Council Chair	Greg McElwee	Northwest Ga GNETS
President-Elect	Cassandra Holifield	North Metro GNETS
Vice President	Michele Bealing-Sayles	Marietta City Schools
Secretary	Pam McKinnon	Glynn County Schools
Treasurer	Damita James	Middle Ga RESA
CEC Representative	MaryKay Berry	White County Schools
Parliamentarian	Rosie Gwin	Fayette County Schools
Professional Learning Chair	Brad Bowling	Barrow County Schools
Legislative Chairs	Jenny Millward	Houston County Schools
Membership Chair	Tonya Plant	Northwest Ga RESA
Communications Chair	Jenny Carpenter	Northwest Ga GNETS
Social Media Co-Chair	Kitty Crawford	Troup County Schools
Strategic Planning Chair	Kelly King	Madison County Schools
Research & Innovation Co- Chairs	Jenny Rooks Carrie Powell	Monroe County Schools North Metro GNETS
Policy and Procedures Chair	Jimmy Pitzer	Walton County Schools
<b>Ex Officio Members</b>		
GaDOE Liaison	Zelphine Smith-Dixon	GaDOE
DOE SELDA Liaisons	Kachelle White Wina Low	GaDOE GaDOE
G-CASE Executive Director	Sarah Burbach	G-CASE/GAEL



# ADVISORY BOARD

## 2020-2021

District	GLRS	Advisory Board Member	System/Agency
1	Northwest GA	Tania Amerson	Bartow County Schools
2	North Central	Kristy Bone	Gilmer County Schools
3	North GA	Katie Lowry	Lumpkin County Schools
4	Metro East	Blake McGaha	Fulton County Schools
4	Metro West	Cheryl Handley	Douglas County Schools
5	Northeast GA	Suzanne Korngold	Oconee County Schools
6	West Central	Cammie Tysver	Carroll County Schools
7	Metro South	Lenora Clarkson	Butts County Schools
8	Middle GA	Catherine Brown	Crawford County Schools
9	Oconee GLRS	Pat Wolf	GNETS of Oconee
10	East Georgia	Dr. Teri Pettyjohn	Columbia County Schools
11 -12	West GA	Loranda Crimes	Marion County Schools
13	East Central	TaKeshia Thomas	Dublin City Schools
14	Southeast GA	Nicole Balkcom	Tattnall County Schools
15	Coastal Area	Mindy Yanzetich	Liberty County Schools
16	Southwest GA	Kerri Miller	Oaktree GNETS
17	South GA	Marcus Richardson	Brooks County Schools
18	South Central	William Hall	Pierce County Schools

*The G-CASE Advisory Board meets at least twice annually with the Executive Board. The Advisory Board is composed of representatives selected by their peers from each GLRS District each year and approved by the Executive Board for a two-year term (which can be renewed). The Advisory Board members voice the concerns of their districts, share professional learning needs, and convey G-CASE-information back to their districts, as appropriate. They also serve as mentors, through SELDA (Special Education Leadership Development Academy) to the new (first and second year) directors in their GLRS areas.*



# G-CASE LILLIE MONCUS SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR NOMINATION APPLICATION



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

## QUALIFICATIONS:

The candidate must:

- be a current Special Education Administrator with five or more years of experience as a special education administrator
- be a member of G-CASE
- demonstrate exemplary leadership and service as a special education administrator
- demonstrate care and concern for students with disabilities and their families
- contribute to the field of special education
- be actively involved in professional and community affairs
- be recognized as an outstanding leader in his/her 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 or educational entity (i.e. school district, GLRS, GaDOE, etc.) and the nomination is endorsed by a current active member of G-CASE.

Nominations must include:

- Completed Nomination Application Form
- Narrative detailing exemplary service as a Special Education Administrator (two-page max)
- Minimum of two Letters of Support

Completed Nomination Application Packets should be submitted by email to:

**Dr. Zabrina Cannady, G-CASE Immediate Past-President**

[zabrina.cannady@hcbe.net](mailto:zabrina.cannady@hcbe.net)

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## Nomination Application Form

Name of Nominee:

School System:

Position:

Work Address:

Email Address:

Work Telephone:

Cell Telephone:

Number of Years in Education:

Number of Years in Current Position as an Administrator of Special Education:

**Name of Person Making Nomination:**

**Email Address:**

**Work Telephone:**

**Cell Telephone:**

Include this Nomination Form with a narrative detailing exemplary service as a Special Education Administrator (two-page max) and a minimum of two Letters of Support.





## Special Education Administrator Leadership Academy (Special Education ADA)

Start thinking now of special education teacher leaders who will make good special education administrators! Because of Georgia's critical shortage of trained educators moving into system special education leadership roles, G-CASE is sponsoring a year-long **Special Education Administrator Leadership Academy (Special Education ADA)** for teachers of special education who are being vetted for broader leadership roles. This program will segway naturally into the GaDOE's SELDA program for new directors once the teacher leader achieves that goal.

The ideal candidate for the Special Education Administrator Development Academy is a proven teacher leader with five or more years of experience as a special education teacher who is identified by his/her principal, special education director, and/or superintendent and aspires to move into an administrative position within the field of special education.

The first cohort for the Special Education Administrator Development Academy will consist of twenty-five (25) special education teachers who aspire to move into an administrative position within the field of special education. Members of Cohort 1 will be selected through a rigorous application process. Interested parties may self-nominate or be nominated by a school or district administrator. The application process, along with the cost of the Academy will go out to stakeholders in January, 2021, with the Academy beginning in June and ending at the G-CASE Spring Legal Forum in March, 2022. This Professional Learning opportunity will involve 55 clock hours of onsite training over ten days (with two of the ten days in the summer) spread out over the school year.

The curriculum will be based upon the *Administrator of Special Education Advanced Leadership Standards* outlined in draft form by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE). As part of the Special Education ADA, participants will complete a culminating project in which they illustrate their understanding of a chosen advanced standard by creating a product that can be used to advance the outcome of students with disabilities in their own school systems. Instructors for the Special Education Administrator Academy will be state and nationally-known professionals in the field of Special Education.

Georgia's school systems will be immediately stronger by selecting teacher leaders who have participated in the *Special Education Administrator Development Academy* as administrators. Imagine the impact of having an informed, knowledgeable, and skillful new special education administrator from the first day on the job!



Georgia-CASE is a Gold Patron Club supporter for CASE at the \$2500 level. This support allows us many opportunities to participate and be visible at the national level.

The Gold Club allows us to receive recognition and special benefits at national conferences and webinars.

### GCASE Officers Serve on GAEL Board of Directors

G-CASE members are well-represented on the GAEL Board of Directors. Tris Gilland, President of G-CASE, and Cassandra Holifield, President-Elect, serve as voting members of the 2020-2021 GAEL Board of Directors, with Sarah Burbach, G-CASE Executive Director, attending ex officio. Zabrina Cannady, G-CASE Immediate Past-President, is beginning her term as appointed GAEL Treasurer. The GAEL Board of Directors meets four times a year to oversee and put forth GAEL's objectives to maintain and elevate the professional and ethical standards of the education profession in the areas of school administration and supervision.





# G-CASE LEGISLATIVE CHAIRS WORK WITH GAEL TO ESTABLISH FY21 PRIORITIES

G-CASE Legislative Co-Chairs Jenny Millward and Sean Cooper are working with all the GAEL affiliates to finalize the GAEL FY21 Legislative Priorities. It is essential for all GAEL members to have one voice in Atlanta during the upcoming legislative session, and this list unites all Georgia educators into sharing their major concerns with our lawmakers at the Capital. G-CASE will share the FY21 GAEL Priorities as soon as it is published.



## **G-CASE Advisory Board Members do More than Just Advise!**

G-CASE Advisory Board members do more than *just* “advise”! Last year an important responsibility was added to their list – they also serve as year-long Mentors to new (first and second year) directors participating in the SELDA program. Mentors must have a minimum of three years of experience as a Director of Special Education or the equivalent; be willing to volunteer time and knowledge to the new directors; be supportive and passionate about improving outcomes for students with disabilities; partner with the area GLRS Director and GaDOE District Liaison (DL) at each monthly Special Education Director/Collaborative Communities meeting to provide support and knowledge to the new director(s), and be available to the new director(s) at GLRS meetings and when needed.

G-CASE is honored to present our **2020-2021 Advisory Board SELDA Mentors**: Tania Amerson, Kristy Bone, Katie Lowry, Blake McGaha, Cheryl Handley, Suzanne Korngold, Cammie Tysver, Lenora Clarkson, Catherine Brown, Pat Wolf, Teri Pettyjohn, Loranda Crimes, TaKeshia Thomas, Nicole Balkcom, Mindy Yanzetich, Kerri Miller, Marcus Richardson, and William Hall.





# Toni Molinari Scholarship Winner Goes to CEC International Convention

Submitted by: Dr. Brad Bowling

In 2018, I transitioned from middle school principal to director of special education. During the transition, I was immediately impressed with, and quite grateful for, the variety of supports available for new directors from a plethora of organizations. These areas include the Northeast Georgia GLRS and LSEAC, G-CASE, GAEL, SELDA, GADOE, and more. From the beginning, I not only welcomed the support, but also thoroughly enjoyed the learning process, and even more, the people associated with all of these organizations. A recurring theme began to emerge- all of these groups have a laser-like focus on what is best for students and advocacy for both students with disabilities and professionals working with these students are at the cornerstone for each of these organizations. These experiences ignited a passion for me, and I immediately knew I wanted to be a part of the work each organization was doing. It was then when I received the email with the information regarding the Tony Molinari Scholarship, and with this ignited passion, I applied for it. The scholarship, with the support of my district, enabled me to attend the CEC International Convention in Portland, Oregon. I quickly found that CASE and CEC were also about the business of doing what is best for our students, but on a national and even international scale. While there, I learned about OSEP Ideas that Work, the IRIS Center, reading strategies, the work of behavior specialists, behavior data collection and modification strategies in a variety of settings, high quality co-teaching strategies, developing Teacher Leaders, specially designed instruction, FBAs and BIPs, mental health, maximizing the work of Para educators, and more. In fact, I am still going through information I learned at the conference, and looking at ways we can use the information to better serve our students here in Barrow County. I am certainly more than happy to share any of the information with those interested upon request; however, in sum, I would like to share my big takeaway from attending the conference. We, as administrators in special education, have the extraordinary privilege and responsibility to work with exceptional students each day. In doing so, there are a variety of organizations that will support us in that work. I strongly encourage you to not only join, but to become active participants in both CEC and CASE. I have seen firsthand what organizations like these can ultimately offer our students. While attending the conference may not be an option for you, I hope you will tap in to the resources from each of these organizations in some way. I think we owe that to our students at the end of the day, and I think you will be very glad that you did.

## G-CASE Strategic Plan

The G-CASE Strategic Plan was reviewed and updated at the G-CASE Retreat in June and is located on the G-CASE website at <http://gcase.schoolinsites.com/>. Look it over and discover all the goals G-CASE has accomplished, along with new ones for the future!



## G-CASE Partners with SELDA



G-CASE leaders shared information about the group with new directors at their August SELDA virtual meeting. Professional Learning Chair, Brad Bowling, then led the group through an entertaining and beneficial Leadership activity featuring special activities, handouts, videos from Shawn Achor ("Happiness Advantage") and David Salyers (Chick-Fil-A), identification of core values, and information from several books on Leadership ("The Leadership Challenge," by Kouzes and Posner; "Good to Great," by James Collins; "How Full is Your Bucket" by Tom Rath). G-CASE also provided each SELDA member free access to all the collaborative conversations and webinars held through October so that they could begin the school year with crucial state information. G-CASE welcomes the 70+ SELDA participants into the organization!



## Memberships during COVID and Beyond

Membership in state and national organizations is now more vital than ever! G-CASE membership grants you access to timely and critical conferences and webinars at reduced rates, as well as high-powered, professional learning geared to Georgia's administrators of special education throughout the year. G-CASE also represents you, legislatively, in person, in Atlanta and Washington and with governmental groups such as the State Board of Education and the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) through public comments and letters.

The Membership Year for G-CASE runs from July 1 to June 30; however, G-CASE always extends the membership year until November so that memberships can be paid with registration for Fall Conference. Since there will be no Fall Conference this year, memberships can be paid in one of the two ways listed below:

⇒ **Join on the GAEL website ([gael.org](http://gael.org)).**

Click on the *Membership* tab, *Join Now*, *G-CASE Memberships*

G-CASE Membership is \$50/year

CEC/CASE membership is \$127.00/year

*You can purchase one or both of these memberships at this site. (Remember to renew your CEC/CASE membership here if you usually do it when you register for Fall Conference so that it will not expire.)*

⇒ **Join when you register for the upcoming year-long G-CASE Webinar Series**

*(The registration site goes live on the GAEL website in mid-October. G-CASE will send out information in the next few weeks.)*

Membership options are included with the price of the webinar.

If you have any questions about your G-CASE, CEC/CASE, or GAEL memberships, please contact Sarah Burbach, G-CASE Executive Director ([sburbach@gael.org](mailto:sburbach@gael.org)).



**Thank you for supporting G-CASE so G-CASE can support you!**



## G-CASE Offers Public Comment to the SBOE Regarding the Proposed SST/Dyslexia Rule

Led by former SSTAGE President and long-time G-CASE member John O'Connor, members of the G-CASE Executive Committee and the current President of SSTAGE, Courtney Rogers, discussed possible implications of the State Board of Education's Proposed Rule on SST/Dyslexia with Dr. Caitlin Dooley, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning and Dr. Zephine Smith-Dixon, State Director, Division for Special Education Services and Supports at the GaDOE. Following that conversation, G-CASE, joined by SSTAGE (Student Support Team Association for Georgia Educators) and GAESP (Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals), offered written public comment on the rule. Parts of the rule were revised (with a few of G-CASE's recommendations added!) and was re-initiated at the August State Board meeting. G-CASE, SSTAGE, and GAESP have now made a second public comment, focusing on providing targeted and effective interventions for students with characteristics of dyslexia while protecting teacher and students' instructional time. The rule should be on the agenda for the September State Board meeting.

### Public Comment Re: Proposed August 2020 SST/Dyslexia Rule

Respectfully submitted by the Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education  
(G-CASE)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment regarding the August 2020 proposed SST/Dyslexia Georgia Board of Education rule. The Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (G-CASE) is Georgia's professional organization for leaders and administrators in the field of special education across Georgia. We have over 500 active members and provide leadership, support, and resources for all school districts in Georgia.

We commend the Georgia Board of Education and the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) for addressing the needs of students with dyslexia. For decades, we have enjoyed a collaborative and enduring partnership with the Georgia DOE to advocate for and meet the needs of students who require special education services. The Georgia DOE and G-CASE share the goal of increasing the achievement, learning, and growth for all students, including students with disabilities and those with dyslexia. We value the GDOE's leadership and true partnership.

Through our comments, you will notice that we are attempting to provide targeted and effective interventions for students with dyslexia while protecting teacher and students' instructional time. It is counterproductive to create layers of meetings and testing activities for students in an attempt to

increase student learning when those activities actually reduce the amount of time that our teachers can devote to provide high-quality instruction.

Below, you will see gratitude for changes that were made to the June 2020 version of this proposed rule, followed by our recommendation that will meet the needs for identifying students with dyslexia while protecting instructional time.

In the proposed August 2020 rule, we thank you for:

- Explicitly stating that the requirements for local school systems begin during the 2024-2025 school year in accordance with the state legislation. That clarity will enable school districts to learn from the dyslexia pilot project and to strategically plan and implement actions in anticipation of that school year.
- Reducing the required number of times that kindergarten students must participate in screening activities to one time per year. With that requirement, kindergarten students can be screened once near the school year's midpoint. By doing that, students will have the opportunity to adapt to their kindergarten school year before they are assessed. In addition, there will not be a screening process at the end of the school year which will be duplicated at the beginning of students' 1<sup>st</sup> grade year.
- Including the phrase, *"and additional information"* in section (3)(e)(5). That ensures that school personnel can review a wide variety of qualitative and quantitative data in addition to screener results to determine if specific students exhibit possible indicators of dyslexia.

Based on the proposed August 2020 state rule, G-CASE recommends the following revisions:

- Remove the sentence, "If there is a moderate risk for the characteristics of dyslexia or other reading difficulties, then student progress on prescribed evidence-based interventions should be monitored once a week." **The students mentioned in this sentence have significant needs and if this sentence remains, they will actually participate in their instructional interventions less often than before.** For example, if a teacher has 40 minutes per day for providing reading interventions to students in this category, then one entire lesson per week will be devoted to assessing each child individually rather than providing instruction to those students. These progress monitoring probes must be delivered individually, and if the quick assessment only takes 4 minutes for each student, then one full instructional period per week is lost to assessing students rather than teaching students. The young boys and girls that need *more* instructional interventions actually receive less because of more frequent assessment (not intervening) activities. To offer an analogy, stepping on a scale (measuring progress) is not the action that helps a person lose weight any more than measuring reading progress helps a student learn to read. Cont. on page 14

A person attempting to get in shape must exercise just like a student with a reading disorder must participate in **daily**, effective interventions. The first sentence that was added in that paragraph that mentions progress monitoring “monthly or more often as needed” is sufficient to describe the required frequency of progress monitoring assessments and enables schools to make individualized decisions regarding the needs of their students.

In addition, the Georgia Board of Education is continuing to reduce the number of state-mandated assessments required of students in Georgia. For example, the number of mandated high school assessments has just been reduced because of the negative impact of too many assessments on students’ instruction and educational efforts. Requiring **weekly** assessments for certain students flies in the face of GDOE’s current efforts to reduce assessments.

- **We strongly recommend that a separate rule be created regarding dyslexia as it should not be included under the general SST rule.** The proposed rule could be interpreted to require that each child who is screened for dyslexia must have SST meetings that include the parents and required school personnel. Some respected experts in dyslexia suggest that up to 20% of the general population have risk for dyslexia, and therefore, perhaps 30% of an elementary school’s population could need dyslexia-specific screening.

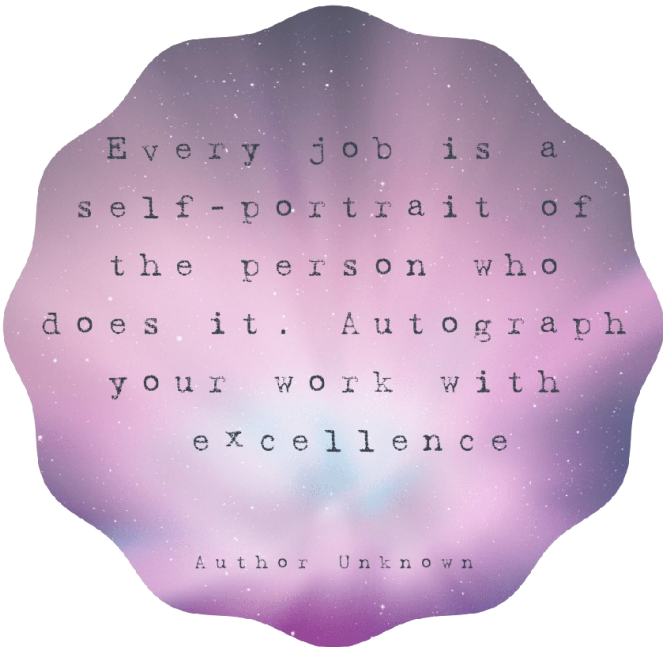
In an elementary school with 500 students in K-3, then this rule would require that each school have 150 SST meetings with individual parents if they only meet annually, which is not the case in most schools. If those elementary schools meet three times per year for each child who is under SST, which is most common across Georgia, **then this rule would dictate that the school add 450 individual meetings** with parents to their calendar year – time that is taken away from teachers teaching students.

If a separate rule will not be created, then a sentence should be added that states that, **“This rule does not require that students who participate in dyslexia screening must be under the Student Support Team.”**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments regarding the proposed SST Rule. We appreciate the changes that were made in the August 2020 version of this rule and hope that additional changes will be made to protect valuable instructional time for all students, including students with dyslexia.

**NOTE TO ALL G-CASE MEMBERS:**

The GaDOE asked that we encourage systems to use their SLPs for support with the language and phonemic components of dyslexia, have at least one “dyslexia-endorsed” person on their staff, and understand that educators CAN diagnose dyslexia.







FIND G-CASE ONLINE



**The G-CASE Executive Board passed several new policies and procedures during the summer retreat in June. Some of these policies and procedures will remain in draft form until voted on by members at the next G-CASE Business Meeting (held in November), per the G-CASE Constitution. These documents will be placed in the updated Policy Manual on the G-CASE website (<http://gcase.schoolinsites.com/>) before the November General Business Meeting. They will include the revised G-CASE Constitution, Program of Work, and Emeritus Council policy, Succession to GAEL Presidency Policy, and a policy allowing G-CASE business decisions to be made electronically, when appropriate.**



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.

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