



G-CASE COMMENTS

An Affiliate of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders

President's Corner



Although I try diligently to remind myself of what I'm thankful for throughout the year, it seems I make more of a habit of it during the holiday season. It seems fitting that this year, I am especially thankful for a fantastic G-CASE Annual Conference!

I'm thankful for the many hard working people that it took to make our conference successful!

- I am thankful that the positive energy from the National CASE conference, held the week before, carried right over into our G-CASE conference.
- As you are each well aware, anything we do does not happen without the diligent work of our Executive Director, Sarah Burbach. I sure am thankful for her.
- I'm thankful for the Executive Board, who did too many things to mention to help make the conference happen. I'm thankful for the Advisory Board, each

GLRS, our conference ambassadors, and for GAEL, who each were instrumental in the success of the conference, too!

- I'm thankful for our Keynote Speakers: Dave Weber, Holley Witcher, Shaun Owen, Michelle Trujillo, John O'Connor, Joe Martin, and Phil Hartley, who delivered a plethora of practical and inspirational information.
- I'm thankful for our sponsors and exhibitors, and for the relationships they have developed and continue to cultivate with G-CASE. Not only do they share tools that are game-changers for our students, they also host numerous dinners, receptions, and more that truly enhance our conference.
- I'm thankful for each of our conference breakout presenters, who presented fantastic information on a wide variety of topics related to positive relationship building among all stakeholders.
- I'm thankful for our Administrator Development Academy participants and attendees.
- I'm thankful for the Hyatt Regency staff
- **I'm especially thankful to each of you and want to sincerely thank you for attending and participating in the conference!**

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President's Corner

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As you know, the theme for the conference was Revitalizing Relationships-Face to Face. In just the list above, were you to build a "relationship tree", you would see there are hundreds of examples of strong, positive relationships throughout our state and nation. What I'm most thankful for is how those relationships ultimately change student lives for the better. I'm thankful for what each of you do every single day to change student lives on a daily basis. I hope you enjoyed the conference and were inspired as much as I was. I look forward to seeing you at our Spring Legal Forum March 3rd-5th, 2025 in Athens, GA. Stay tuned for more information on that to come in the new year.

From the bottom of my heart, THANKS AGAIN AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

-Dr. Brad Bowling, G-CASE President



Dr. Brad Bowling, G-CASE President, kicked off the National CASE Conference with a big welcome to Georgia!

Notes from the Executive Director ***Sarah Burbach***



What a Fall!

G-CASE started the season off with the September Session of the **Special Education Administrator Development Academy (ADA)**. Thirty-five ADA participants spent the day with John O'Connor as they learned about *GREAT Instruction – GREAT Achievement for Students with Disabilities*. In October, G-CASE was represented at the **GAEL Board of Directors** meeting in Athens as GAEL began working on a new Strategic Plan to lead them, and their affiliates, into the coming years. At the end of October, we got to know our **SELDA** participants better as we partnered and presented with the GaDOE for their monthly meeting. Then came November! Many of us spent two straight weeks in Savannah attending the **National CASE Conference** and then our own **G-CASE Conference!** Your G-CASE Executive Board took turns greeting guests from all over the country to Georgia during the National CASE Conference, and then meeting, leading, supporting, presenting, and working at the G-CASE Conference. We have been RE-VITALIZED!

What a Winter!

In January, we will be hosting several more important Professional Learning opportunities: Julie Weatherly will be presenting our most-frequently asked for topic *The Rules of Discipline for Students with Disabilities and Their Practical Implications* geared to special education directors, lead teachers, principals, assistant principals, and superintendents. The Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative, of which G-CASE is a founding member, will sponsor a **Dyslexia Think Tank: Considering Criteria for Determining Characteristics of Dyslexia** at the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Learning and Literacy. **ADA** will have another great learning day with Amy Spicer on Personnel and Dr. Steven Hornyak on Data. The **GAEL Winter Conference Attitude Determines Altitude** finishes out our January. **PAGE Day at the Capital** will be in February where we get the opportunity to share our educational priorities with our legislators (*special thanks to our Legislative Committee Co-Chairs for lifting up the need to reduce the ratio for counselors, school psychologists, and social workers!*), and Julie Weatherly will spend the day on the topics our people said they want to learn the most about at the **Coordinator Skills Institute (CSI)**. March brings us the **2025 Spring Legal Conference**, and G-CASE President, Brad Bowling is finalizing that agenda now! It's going to be another great one!

Information about these activities, applications for new officers and awards, recaps, and a lot more is included in this newsletter. Settle in and enjoy news our wonderful, chosen profession!

-Sarah Burbach, G-CASE Executive Director



G-CASE

Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education
2022-2025 Strategic Plan

VISION

A unified voice promoting excellence in leaders of programs for students with disabilities

MISSION

- Promote professional learning
- Promote engaged membership
- Promote effective leadership

PURPOSE

G-CASE advocates for improved services for students with disabilities

STRATEGY

To promote equity, access, inclusion, and belonging to everyone. *(Added by Executive Board: June, 2024)*

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Impact legislation and policy

- To impact state legislation and policy by identifying and advocating for key issues/legislative priorities
- To impact national legislation and policy related to IDEA and other special education-focused regulations by identifying and advocating for key issues.

Promote engaged membership

- To increase, honor, and celebrate membership in G-CASE (state organization) by ensuring member loyalty, retention, and engagement
- To increase membership in CEC/CASE (national organization) by offering efficient registration and an awareness of the benefits of belonging to a professional organization

Provide performance-based professional learning

- To build the knowledge capacity of members in order to provide improved services for students with disabilities
- To develop and enhance the leadership skills of new members at all levels of administration by strengthening the pipeline from teacher to director
- To expand the leadership skills of all members
- To communicate timely, accurate information that will encourage improved services for students with disabilities
- To value the experience and expertise of Past-Presidents and G-CASE-awarded individuals in the design, implementation, and presentation of professional learning activities



Professional Learning

The Rules of Discipline for Students with Disabilities
and Their Practical Implications

Presented by
Julie Weatherly, Esq.

January 13, 2025
9:00-4:00
\$250

First District RESA
149 S. Register St.
Metter, GA 30439

The recommended audience is special education directors, coordinators*, lead teachers, principals,
assistant principals, and superintendents.

**Special Education Coordinators will receive some of this information at the Coordinator Skills Institute (CSI) in February.*

Professional Learning in the area of **discipline** for students with disabilities continues to be the Number One subject our members ask for the most. This G-CASE Drive-In One-Day Workshop for special and general education leaders features nationally-known attorney Julie Weatherly as she addresses this critical, timely issue.

Join Julie as she focuses on the actual rules of discipline for students with disabilities and *how they apply* to in-school suspension, alternative schools, bus transportation, students who exhibit dangerous behaviors, Manifestation Determination Reviews, and more.

The recommended audience is special education directors, coordinators*, lead teachers, principals, assistant principals, and superintendents.

**Special Education Coordinators will receive some of this information at the Coordinator Skills Institute (CSI) in February.*

Lunch and snacks provided.

REGISTER NOW:

<https://gael.ps.membersuite.com/events/ViewEvent.aspx?contextID=e386dc0a-0078-c9a6-9cec-0b479678a01d>

CSI: Coordinator Skills Institute

With Julie Weatherly
Friday, February 21, 2025
9:00 to 4:00

Houston County Annex Auditorium
1600 Macon Road, Suite A
Perry, GA

The Rules for Discipline for Students with Disabilities and Their Practical Implications; Making Defensible Manifestation Determinations; Options for Dealing with Dangerous Students with Disabilities; Developing Legally-Defensible IEPs; Child-Find Requirements, Referrals, Red Flags, and MTSS/RTI; and Prior Written Notice Requirements under IDEA

Join nationally-known attorney Julie Weatherly for a one-day Drive-In Conference in Perry, Georgia (Houston County) to expand your knowledge base for **practical, useful, timely, advanced, and needed special education information** based on survey results from coordinators and directors.

The **IDEAL CANDIDATES** to attend this one-day conference are Coordinators, Program Managers, and Specialists; as well as possible new hires and/or aspiring coordinators for the next school year at this level. Presenter Julie Weatherly will cover in one day the “most-frequently asked-for” topics at an advanced level for this group of practitioners.

All CSI participants will receive the acclaimed CASE book *The Journey to Effective Leadership*. A hot, catered lunch, snacks and drinks will be provided.

[Registration Now Open](#)

Professional Learning!



Presents

**Dyslexia Think Tank:
Considering Criteria for Determining Characteristics of Dyslexia**

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

**Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Learning and Literacy
Georgia College and State University
9:00 AM-3:00 PM**

**Free for Members of the *Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative*
\$50 for Non-Members
Limited Seating**

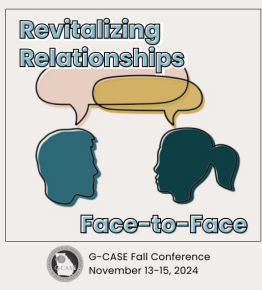
Suggested Audience: Curriculum and Instruction Administrators, MTSS Leaders, Special Education Administrators, Principals, Assistant Principals, School Psychologists, and Speech/Language Pathologists

Across Georgia, elementary leaders and teachers are working hard to implement effective ELA instruction in accordance with the Georgia Early Literacy Act and SB 48 regarding dyslexia. During this think tank session, sponsored by G-CASE partner the *Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative* and the *Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy*, participants will brainstorm how to establish criteria (including professional judgment) for determining which students have "characteristics of dyslexia." The goal for the day WILL NOT be to establish common criteria or guidelines across the state, but to create an opportunity to brainstorm pros and cons of different approaches for districts to consider.

The audience for this timely workshop will consist of any administrators and leaders who are leading the elementary structured literacy and assessment work such as Curriculum and Instruction Administrators, MTSS Leaders, Special Education Administrators, Principals, Assistant Principals, School Psychologists, and Speech/Language Pathologists.

Lunch and snacks included.

[Dyslexia Think Tank Registration](#)



G-CASE Fall Conference RECAP: *Revitalizing Relationships: Face to Face*

- ◆ **453 Participants**

- ◆ **39 Exhibitors**

- ◆ **State and Nationally-Known Keynote Speakers:**

Dave Weber, Holly Witcher, Shaun Owen and GaDOE Panel Michelle Trujillo, John O'Connor, Garry McGiboney, Heather Stanley, Danielle Fish, Joe Martin, Phil Hartley

- ◆ **CASE Representation**

*Phyllis Wolfram, Executive Director
Zabrina Cannady, Director of Professional Learning*

- ◆ **52 Breakouts Sessions**

Featuring GaDOE Staff, April Aldridge, Amy Denty, John O'Connor, Amy Trujillo, Beth Morris, Reagan Sauls, MaryGrace Kittrell, Dan Murphy

- ◆ **Pre-Conference Sessions**

SELDA Legal Issues, GLRS Directors Meeting, G-CASE Advisory and Executive Board

- ◆ **Special Activities**

Executive Board Dinner (Sponsored by Goalbook); Mentor Mingle (Sponsored by SES); Advisory Board Dinner (Sponsored by Touchmath and Classworks); CEC Social (Sponsored by Robokind); President's Reception (Sponsored by Touchmath and Classworks); ADA Social (Sponsored by G-CASE)

- ◆ **Silent Auction**

- ◆ *\$2982 in winning bids going to ADA Scholarships*

- ◆ **Awards**

*Lillie Moncus (Kitty Crawford);
Friends of G-CASE (Wina Low, Karin Fisher, Missy Sullivan, GAEL)*

- ◆ **Door Prizes**

Beautiful Gift Baskets donated by GLRSs; Gifts from Exhibitors

- ◆ **Special Thanks**

SES and University of West Georgia (Presenting Sponsors), Adapted Sports (Executive Board Gifts), Lanyards (Goalbook), Tote Bags (ChanceLight)



G-CASE Fall Conference RECAP: *Revitalizing Relationships: Face to Face*



Immediate Past-President Michele Sayles Harris inducts 2024-2025 G-CASE Officers: Dr. Kristi-Lee Arrington (Treasurer), Dr. Brad Bowling (President), Dr. MaryKay Berry (President-Elect), and Dr. Damita James (Vice-President) during the Business Meeting.





G-CASE Fall Conference: *Revitalizing Relationships: Face to Face*

There was a lot of behind-the-scenes work that went on to make the 2024 Fall G-CASE Conference run flawlessly! Every minute (*really!*) of each conference day is carefully timed out, along with the script that aligns to the presenters that aligns to their slides that aligns to the music that aligns to the time contracted for meals and snacks that aligns to breakout sessions and rooms, that aligns to.....And everything was delivered on a grand scale thanks to our **Conference Ambassadors!** This carefully-selected group helped with everything throughout the conference –giving directions, helping with registration, greeting keynote presenters, making sure Sponsors were on stage at the right time, helping exhibitors set up (and take down), manning the Silent Auction, and answering tons of questions. They were wonderful!

Ambassadors for the 2024 G-CASE Fall Conference were Janet McClendon (*Special Education Lead Teacher, Greene County Schools*); Courtney Eaton (*Speech Language Pathologist/CCEIS Coordinator, Pulaski County Schools*); Melissa Andrews (*Special Education Department Chair, MTSS Coordinator, Washington County Schools*); and Nichole Winchester (*Middle/High School Lead Teacher, Pulaski County Schools*). They were joined by Ambassador Captain Larissa Beecher (*GLRS Coordinator, School Improvement Specialist, Middle Georgia RESA*); and GaCEC President Veronica Williams (*Assistant Director of Special Education Compliance, Georgia Cyber Academy*).



G-CASE Call for Nominations for Officers

The deadline to nominate strong supporting G-CASE members for officer positions on the G-CASE Executive Board for the next school year is January 10, 2025. You will be nominating and later voting on the positions of **Vice-President** (which moves into President-Elect, then President, then Immediate Past President, then President Emeritus over the next five years), **Secretary** (two-year term; *The Secretary shall ensure accurate Minutes of all meetings of the Executive Board and General Business Meetings and carries out correspondence as necessary regarding matters delegated by the President*) and **Representative to Georgia CEC** (two-year term; *The Representative to the Georgia CEC shall serve as the liaison between G-CASE and CEC. This person shall also oversee the CEC scholarships. They shall represent G-CASE at all required meetings called by the Georgia Council for Exceptional Children*).

All of these positions are vital to the G-CASE organization as G-CASE continues to grow by providing professional learning to our members and partners and strongly advocating for our priorities to legislators and State Board of Education members. Remember, you can certainly nominate yourself!

Serving as an officer of G-CASE is an honor that supports special education at the local, state, and national levels. Each year, the Executive Board bonds to become a unified group of professional colleagues and friends working for the same goals to achieve the highest outcomes for our students with disabilities. Please consider joining this active group of educators who work on behalf of all of us – and our students and teachers.

Office holders will be trained well and supported by the Executive Director, President, and other members of the Executive Board. The time spent on G-CASE activities (it's really not very time-consuming!) will only enhance the work you are already doing now for students with disabilities. You can *(and should!)* do this!

Please consider becoming involved at this level! We welcome your input and leadership!

[G-CASE Executive Board Office Nomination Application](#)

NOMINATIONS DUE JANUARY 10, 2025.
Announced at the 2025 Spring Legal Conference!



G-CASE/GaDOE Partnership: Special Education Leadership Development Academy (SELDA)

SELDA, the Special Education Leadership Development Academy, continues to be a strong cog in the special education administrative pipeline! On October 29th, G-CASE Executive Director Sarah Burbach and Dr. Zabrina Cannady represented G-CASE at the SELDA meeting at Middle Georgia GLRS. Sarah spoke about the importance of joining professional organizations such as CASE, G-CASE, CEC, GaCEC, and GAEL and provided an overview of the upcoming G-CASE Fall Conference. Zabrina led a well-received inclusive leadership simulation activity to help new directors learn strategies for initiating and leading collaborative efforts with general education administrators (n ways that ensure effective inclusion, problem-SELDA Day was celebrated throughout the first day of the G-CASE Fall Conference in Savannah with G-CASE hosting the group for a Pre-Conference Session, *IDEA: Special Education Law 101*, with attorneys Beth Morris and Reagan Sauls, Partners in the law firm Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein L.L.P., followed by a catered lunch. SELDA participants were recognized following the GaDOE Panel Discussion and given booklets from the CASE Essentials Series, which provide quick references about special education key topics. SELDA Day ended for participants and their mentors from the G-CASE Advisory Board with an elaborate Charcuterie Social sponsored by presenting Sponsor, SES. SELDA participants were also treated to a fun night for the President's Reception at Savannah Smiles, sponsored by TOUCHMATH and CLASSWORKS.

G-CASE appreciates the SELDA partnership with GaDOE facilitators Belinda Tiller, Lynn Holland, and Elise James. SELDA will be again be hosted by G-CASE at the Spring Legal Forum in Athens in March.



Beth Morris and Reagan Sauls present Legal 101



SELDA Charcuterie Social sponsored by SES

Welcome Dr. Charity Roberts!

(Press Release)

Dr. Charity Roberts will assume the position of Special Education Director on January 1, 2025. She currently resides in Jackson County, Georgia, but spent most of her education and professional career in Southeast Georgia. She is a quadruple Eagle from Georgia Southern University, obtaining her bachelor's and master's degrees in special education. She completed a specialist degree in Educational Leadership and, in 2012, earned a doctorate in the same field. She is certified in multiple fields within general and special education such as elementary education, reading (P-8), special education preschool, physical and health disabilities, as well as P-12 special education adaptive and general curriculum.

Dr. Roberts has 30+ years' experience in special education instruction and leadership in a variety of roles. After serving as a special education teacher, she transitioned into the role of a district director of special education. From there, Dr. Roberts provided leadership support as a GLRS Director at both First District RESA and Pioneer RESA for twelve years. In this role, she provided support to leaders and teachers in 33+ school systems. During this time, she had the honor to serve on a variety of advisory boards such as the Parent Mentor Partnership, Student Support Team Association of Georgia, RESA Professional Learning Committees, Georgia Professional Standards Task Force, and Teacher Education Advisory Boards. In addition to her job duties, Dr. Roberts served as part-time faculty for Georgia Southern University in the College of Education for ten years.

In 2023, she began her career at the Georgia Department of Education as an Instructional Specialist in the Office of Rural Education and Innovation. Her primary focus has been to support the installation of structured literacy across rural schools in Georgia in support of SB48 and HB538. As part of this work, she led the rural literacy professional learning by coordinating the participation of rural district staff in Orton Gillingham, Wilson Reading System, and LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling). Dr. Roberts completed the LETRS course and became a local certified facilitator of LETRS in 2024. She is

a strong supporter of high-quality instruction, services, and support for students with disabilities and has been invited to present about a variety of topics related to special education, instruction, and literacy by multiple organizations such as GAEL, SSTAGE, GaDOE Federal Programs, multiple RESAs, G-CASE, and the Rollins Center. Dr. Roberts looks forward to the opportunity to serve students, families, educators, and agency partners in the role as Special Education Director for the state of Georgia.



Dr. Charity Roberts

Time to Nominate!

2024 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, 2025**. Please visit the link below for more information and the application:

[Outstanding New Special Education Director Award Nomination Application](#)



Court Issues New IDEA Ruling on School Refusal

By MaryGrace Kittrell

On October 31, 2024, the Eleventh Circuit¹ issued a ruling in I.S. by and through M.S. v. Fulton County School District. The decision is the Eleventh Circuit's most recent decision analyzing whether a Georgia school district complied with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and it is the only Eleventh Circuit IDEA decision that has come from Georgia since 2022. Attorneys at Parker Poe Adams and Bernstein have been working on this matter since 2017. Below is a summary of the matter.

I.S. is a student with autism and a history of anxiety, social phobia, depression, suicidal thoughts, and self-harm. He qualified for special education services under the IDEA under the emotional behavior disorder and autism eligibility categories. He is intelligent but exhibited school refusal.

In middle school, his parents enrolled him at Eaton Academy, a private day school in Atlanta. He struggled with school refusal and emotional challenges and changed schools several times until he returned to Eaton for the 2015-2016 school year. That year, he made significant progress in overcoming his school refusal. He took a full course load and earned high grades. To avoid a due process hearing, the parties agreed that the school district would pay for I.S. to attend Eaton for the 2016-2017 school year.

I.S. refused to attend school almost immediately after the 2016-2017 school year began. The school district convened a series of IEP meetings, and from September to December 2016, the IEP team agreed that the goal was for I.S. to return to Eaton and resume a full course load. The school district contracted with a private BCBA who developed a plan to reintegrate I.S. to Eaton over several months. In the meantime, the school district offered to send a certified teacher to I.S.'s home to help with schoolwork, and Eaton offered to provide coursework so that I.S. could earn course credit. The district requested more access to I.S. than the family provided.

In December 2016 and January 2017, the family became concerned that the plan to return I.S. to Eaton was not working and notified the school district that they planned to enroll I.S. in a private residential school at the school district's expense. The school district opposed the change in placement and argued that the family had not allowed the school district enough time to implement its plan. The school district convened an IEP meeting and maintained I.S.'s placement at Eaton, continued to offer behavior support for reintegration and teacher support at home, and added counseling services. *(continued on next page)*

¹The Eleventh Circuit is the appellate court that has jurisdiction over federal cases originating in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia.

Court Issues New IDEA Ruling on School Refusal, Continued

The family rejected the school district's offer of FAPE and filed a due process hearing request seeking reimbursement for the private residential placement. The administrative law judge rejected the family's claim and found that the District's IEP offered FAPE. The family appealed the administrative decision to federal district court. The district court also sided with the school district. The family then appealed the matter to the Eleventh Circuit.

The Eleventh Circuit analyzed (1) whether the school district predetermined I.S.'s placement before the January 2017 IEP meeting; (2) whether the school district violated the IDEA by not providing a revised IEP, a functional behavior assessment, or a behavior intervention plan for I.S. during the fall of 2016; and (3) whether the school district failed to offer FAPE.

The Eleventh Circuit found no evidence of predetermination. The school district repeatedly engaged the parents in meetings, listened to their concerns, and was open to discussing options. The Eleventh Circuit also found that the school district tried various strategies to reengage I.S. in Eaton's academic program with support from the private BCBA and a plan for gradual reintegration. Although the school district repeatedly proposed having a teacher work with I.S. at home, the court found it was clear the suggestion was intended as an interim measure and not a permanent placement that the school district predetermined. When the family mentioned the private residential school for the first time at a December 2016 meeting, the school district did not reject the idea. Instead, it said it would look into the school. At the next meeting, the team had a long discussion about the appropriate placement for him and ultimately kept his placement the same.

The Court then assessed whether the school district violated the IDEA by not making any written changes to I.S.'s IEP from August 2016 to January 2017 and by failing to conduct an FBA or provide a BIP. The court stated that the IDEA requires an IEP team to review a student's IEP at least annually and to revise it "as appropriate." The court found this does not require the IEP team to revise the IEP after every meeting or to amend the IEP any time services are changed to meet a time-sensitive but temporary need. But even if the school district committed a procedural violation by not updating his IEP, the court held that I.S. suffered no substantive harm because everyone, including the family, understood that the plan was for I.S. to return to Eaton. The failure to update the IEP did not prevent the family from actively participating in the team's discussion.

Similarly, the lack of an FBA and BIP did not prevent the family from meaningfully participating in I.S.'s education or deprive I.S. of any educational benefits. The private BCBA determined that an FBA and BIP were not necessary or appropriate because she could not observe I.S. at Eaton due to his school refusal. Instead, she formed a hypothesis of his behavior and developed a plan to return I.S. to Eaton.

(continued on next page)

Court Issues New IDEA Ruling on School Refusal, Continued

Overall, the court found that the school district's offer of FAPE in January was appropriate. I.S. was showing significant progress in the BCBA's plan to reintegrate him back into Eaton. The BCBA attempted to schedule numerous visits with I.S., and the family only agreed to a handful. But even in that time, I.S. progressed from refusing to do any schoolwork at home to willingly meeting the BCBA at a coffee shop, logging on and working on class assignments for the duration of the visit, setting goals for himself to complete assignments independently, and completing the additional assignments without assistance. The BCBA was optimistic that I.S. would be able to return to Eaton in several weeks. The school district also offered to provide more academic assistance to I.S. than the family accepted. All of this weighed in favor of the court affirming that the family did *not* prove that the school district failed to offer I.S. FAPE.

The family continues to attempt to appeal this matter.



**G-CASE
Spring
Legal Conference**

March 3-5, 2025

**The Classic Center
Athens**

Registration
Opening in
January





2024-2025 G-CASE Executive Board

Dr. Brad Bowling	President
Michele Sayles Harris	Immediate Past President
Dr. MaryKay Berry	President-Elect
Dr. Damita James	Vice President
Todd Williford	Secretary
Dr. Kristi Lee-Arrington	Treasurer
Open	Parliamentarian
Dr. Ashly Hunter	Representative to GaCEC
Dr. Tris Gilland	Emeritus Council Chair
Sean Cooper	Legislative Co-Chair
Greg McElwee	Legislative Co-Chair
Kitty Crawford	Communications Chair
Tonya Plant	Membership Chair
Michelle Dye	Professional Development Chair
Jenny Rooks	Research and Innovations Chair
Tiera Bowen	Policy and Procedures Chair
Dr. Cindy Felkins	Strategic Plan Chair
Dr. Charity Roberts	<i>Ex Officio</i> , GaDOE State Director
Belinda Tiller	<i>Ex Officio</i> , SELDA
Lynn Holland	<i>Ex Officio</i> , SELDA
Sarah Burbach	Executive Director

National CASE Conference in Savannah

The state of Georgia was honored to host the **National CASE Conference** in Savannah in November. One hundred eighteen (118) Georgia representatives, along with 1300 other special education leaders attended this important “premier professional learning opportunity” featuring nationally recognized keynote speakers, a sold-out Exhibit Hall, and timely, trending Breakouts Sessions (several of which were led by our own G-CASE delegation!) Fifteen members of the G-CASE Executive Board took turns hosting the Hospitality Booth at the convention – welcoming guests with pralines, giving directions to restaurants, and answering questions. The City of Savannah welcomed the CASE conference participants from all over the country, as well, with a marquee at the airport and a big banner across the bridge to the Convention Center! G-CASE President Dr. Brad Bowling, and Executive Director Sarah Burbach attended the CASE Board of Directors meeting, along with Dr. Damita James, (CASE Treasurer; G-CASE Vice-President), and former G-CASE members Dr. Zabrina Cannady (CASE Director of Professional Learning), Dr. Jenny Millward (Executive Director of the National Alliance for Medicaid in Education), and Dr. Luann Purcell (former CASE Executive Director and Strategic Analyst and Consultant, CEC).



Some of the G-CASE Executive Board members at the National CASE Conference

G-CASE Members Share and Shine at the National CASE Conference in Savannah



Keynote Panel Presentation: *Visionary Leadership and Practical Implementation*

Glenna Wright-Gallo, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) with the US Department of Education was joined by G-CASE members Dr. Damita James, Dr. MaryKay White, and Dr. Zelphine Smith-Dixon and other state representatives to kick off the conference.

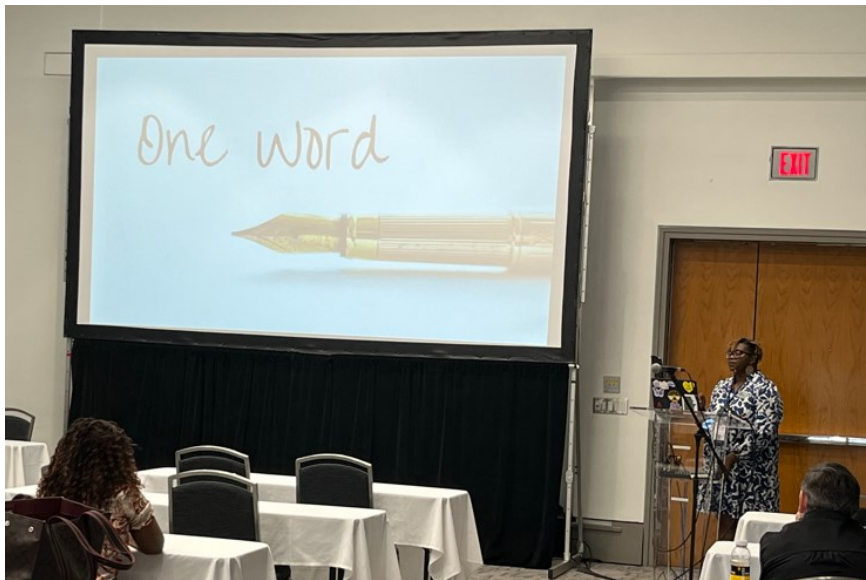


G-CASE Legislative Co-Chair **Sean Cooper** (Director, West GA GLRS) and **Paula Cooper** (Program Specialist, Houston County School District) led a two-hour Breakout Session on *Time-Wise Teaching: Empowering Educators with Behavior Tools*

G-CASE Members Share and Shine at the National CASE Conference in Savannah, *continued*

Georgia presenters had an active role in leading sessions throughout the National CASE Conference!

Dr. Damita James, Dr. MaryKay White, and Dr. Zephine Smith-Dixon joined other special education leaders in a panel discussion with Glenna Wright-Gallo, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) with the US Department of Education. Paula and Sean Cooper, Dr. Damita James, Michelle Dye, John O'Connor, Dr. Jenny Millward, Dr. Luann Purcell, and Dr. Cindy Flesher led Pre-Conference and Breakout Sessions.



Dr. Damita James (G-CASE Vice-President and CASE Treasurer) presented *Wellness Your Way, Getting Your Groove Back*

Michelle Dye (G-CASE Professional Learning Chair; Student Services Director, Burke County Schools) and **LaChonna Avery** (Assistant Principal and IBCP Coordinator, Burke County Schools) presented *Fostering Brilliance: Crafting Assessment-Capable learners in Inclusive Environments*



AWARDS

The CASE 2024 Unit Development Committee Awards

Georgia-CASE was honored once again by National CASE with the AWARD Award, one of six state awards bestowed at the National CASE Conference held in Savannah in November. This award “identifies the State Unit that has sponsored a variety of award programs at the state, national, and international level recognizing the exceptional work and contribution of its members. The evidence of unique and innovative activity in the area of awards led to the current recognition.”

G-CASE is proud of the variety and importance for the awards we bestow each year. Our Awards Committee is chaired by the G-CASE Immediate Past-President and is comprised of the President-Elect and the Vice-President.

From our Unit Award Application:

G-CASE members from across the state participate in and take our Awards Recognition program seriously. The awards bestowed are held in high esteem and are meaningful to our members and their school systems. Press releases, pictures, and other information are sent to the award winners' systems. Special recognition events to honor our award winners are planned at the state and local levels. Friends, relatives, and professional colleagues, even superintendents of the winners, are secretly invited to be at our conferences when the winners are announced, adding more excitement, relevance, and prominence to the award for all of our members to share. This year, the announcements made in person were also zoomed back to the winners' system in real-time so that everyone “back home” could share in the excitement.



G-CASE Vice-President Damita James, Executive Director Sarah Burbach, and President Brad Bowling receive the National CASE AWARD Award from CASE Unit Development Representative Eric Hopstock.

2024 Outstanding Service to CASE Award

Former G-CASE President **Dr. Zabrina Cannady** was honored with the 2024 OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO CASE Award at the CASE Conference in November. This award “recognizes individuals who contributed significantly to CASE and have a history of contributions to CASE that resulted in a positive and significant impact on the work of the organization.”

Zabrina serves as the Director of Professional Learning for National CASE and represented G-CASE as the President of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL) a few years ago. She was named the 2023 *Lillie Moncus Outstanding Special Education Administrator*. She continues her association with G-CASE as the facilitator of the *Special Education Administrator Development Academy (ADA)* and helps coordinate the G-CASE Continuous Pipeline to support selecting, developing, and monitoring future high-capacity special education administrators – by providing professional learning and coaching for individuals from school-level leadership through district leadership.



Members of the G-CASE Executive Board celebrated Zabrina Cannady's win at the National CASE Conference in Savannah.

The G-CASE Executive Board hosted a dinner for G-CASE and CASE Friends and family in honor of Zabrina during the CASE Conference.



Kitty Crawford named Lillie Moncus Outstanding Special Education Administrator

Each year, G-CASE presents the **Lillie Moncus 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.

Kitty Crawford, Director of Exceptional Education for the Troup County Schools, was honored with this award during the G-CASE Fall Conference. Kitty's superintendent, Dr. Rachel Hazel, stated that her "dedication and commitment to students are unmatched. She is not only a key asset to our school system but also a beloved figure in our entire town. Her tireless advocacy and support for all students have made a lasting impact on our community." Her GLRS Director, Marie Yuran, shared that Kitty has "demonstrated exemplary leadership by creating and expanding therapeutic services for some of her system's most vulnerable students and mentoring staff through leadership programs and opportunities." Her team wrote on her application that Kitty is a transformational leader that is reflected not only in her administrative accomplishments but in her personal investment in the lives of students with disabilities and their families. She demonstrates a profound heart of service, fostering a culture of inclusion, advocacy, and meaningful change" and is even a certified trainer in "The Power of Positive Leadership."



Kitty Crawford 2024 Lillie Moncus Outstanding Special Education Administrator Award Winner



Friends of G-CASE

The **Friend of G-CASE Award** is given in recognition and gratitude for the dedicated service, advocacy, devotion, and support of Georgia-CASE. The award is given in appreciation for the contributions, unwavering support, and expert assistance provided to Georgia-CASE. The Georgia-CASE Executive Board bestows this coveted award on a periodic basis, as appropriate. Past winners have included attorneys, an educational lobbyist, a Georgia author and co-founder of the Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative, and even a superintendent! This year's winners of the Friend of G-CASE Award were Wina Low, Missy Sullivan, Dr. Karin Fisher, and the GAEL staff.

Wina Low held the position of GaDOE State Director, Division for Special Education Services and Supports for three important years. Before she joined the GaDOE, Wina was a strong G-CASE leader, even running for and winning the election for G-CASE President. Wina always said that we had one of the hardest, but most rewarding jobs in the school district, and recognized that our students need us. Wina offered positiveness, support, and a quiet enthusiasm to increase outcomes for students with disabilities. She listened to us and let us know she cared.

The **GAEL staff** is a great Friend of G-CASE! They support us on legislative issues, as well as with the State Board of Education and the GaDOE. The GAEL staff works with The G-CASE Executive Director to set up conference registrations/cancelations/substitutions, write our checks, pay our bills, haul and set up what seems like hundreds of projectors, cords, and easels at our conferences, oversee our Coaching Grant, and answer all those questions our people may have about membership and payments. G-CASE is honored to be an affiliate of GAEL!



*Members of the GAEL staff with their **Friend of G-CASE** Award:*

John Tippens, Hal Beaver, Ivy Young, Dr. Cindy Flesher, and Dusty Smith

Friends of G-CASE, continued

Missy Sullivan has been our website administrator for many years, at no cost to us! Missy is the Parent Mentor for Carrollton City Schools and was recently named the *2024 Phil Pickens Parent Mentor Award* recipient. Missy has saved G-CASE thousands of dollars by volunteering her time to keep our website current, and she unveiled our newest website at the G-CASE Fall Conference.



Dr. Karin Fisher is the Immediate Past-President of GaCEC and was an Ambassador at the 2023 G-CASE Fall Conference. She worked hard to put processes in place to increase CEC student and teacher membership. As an Associate Professor of Special Education at Georgia Southern University, She has worked hard to build a strong partnership with G-CASE, including the G-CASE Representative to CEC and the G-CASE Executive Director in planning and governing meetings.

Congratulations! ✨





G-CASE Advisory Board

Advisory Board members voice the concerns of their districts, share professional learning needs, and convey G-CASE-information back to their systems as appropriate. They also serve as mentors/coaches through SELDA (*Special Education Leadership Development Academy*) to the new directors in their GLRS areas.

Tania Amerson, Northwest GA GLRS

Jessica Chastain, North Central GLRS

Karie Lowry, North GA GLRS

Cheryl Handley, Metro East GLRS

Trina Smith, Metro West GLRS

Suzanne Korngold, Northeast GA GLRS

Chrissy Dement, West Central GLRS

Charles Kelley, Metro South GLRS

Catherine Brown, Middle GA GLRS

Tiera Bowen, Oconee GLRS

Michelle Dye, East Georgia GLRS

Kristen Stokes, West GA GLRS

Lynn Freeman, East Central GLRS

Mary Susan Arnold, Southeast GA GLRS

Mindy Yanzetich, Coastal Area GLRS

Kerri Miller, Southwest GA GLRS

Mindell Downing, South GA/Coastal Plains GLRS

Sarah McIntosh, South Central GLRS

Dr. MaryKay Berry and Dr. Damita James, G-CASE Executive Board Liaisons



Special Education Administrator Development Academy: Cohort 4!

Thirty-five participants in the *G-CASE Special Education Administrator Development Academy* attended the 2024 G-CASE Fall Conference in Savannah in November. While taking part in the General Sessions, they broke away into their own breakout groups for two sessions with Dr. Jenny Millward, Executive Director of the National Alliance for Medicaid in Education and Dr. Zabrina Cannady, Director of Professional Learning for national CASE.

The group learned about Policy Implementation, Legal and Ethical Practices of Special Education Programs and Services, and Collaborative Leadership Strategies. Each attendee was given the *StrengthsFinder 2.0: Discover Your Clifton Strengths* book detailing the online leadership assessment they will take before the next session.

The group was honored with a Christmas Charcuterie Board Social during the conference and many stayed for the CEC Social, afterward since tuition to GaCEC, CEC, and CASE comes as part of their ADA tuition.

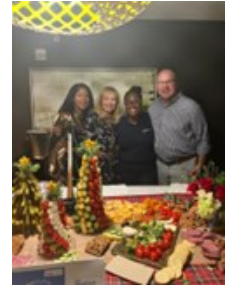
The next session of this esteemed group will be January 16, 2025 in Perry, Georgia. The group will hear from Amy Spicer, Executive Director of Employment for the Henry County Schools on Evaluations, Certifications, Hiring, and Retention and Dr. Steven Hornyak, Director of District and School Effectiveness with the Houston County Schools on Accountability Systems and Data-Based Decision-Making.





Greetings G-CASE Members!

It was so exciting to engage with you all at G-CASE last month! Thanks again to Robokind for sponsoring our Social in Savannah. Congratulations to our raffle winners and our very own Dr. Karin Fisher, who received the "Friend of G-CASE" Award. We also want to welcome our new GaCEC Members who joined at G-CASE!



As you may have heard, the GaCEC Conference (formerly IDEAS) will be Hosted at the University of West Georgia College of Education (Carrollton Campus) June 6-7, 2025! Our keynote speakers are sure to inspire and our Unit is excited to network with Georgia's teacher-leaders and educators. To prepare, here is what you need to know:



 Registration Opens: January 13, 2025

★ Where to Register: [Click here to visit our event website](https://bit.ly/GaCEC2025) (https://bit.ly/GaCEC2025)

💡 Call for Proposals: We're looking for teacher-leaders to share their Expertise! [Submit your ideas here](https://bit.ly/GaCEC-Callforspeakers) today to be part of this incredible experience. (https://bit.ly/GaCEC-Callforspeakers)



Help us make this conference unforgettable – spread the word to your districts and networks! Be SURE to include your CTAE Education Candidates and pre-service students. In addition, dates for Exceptional Children's Week have been shared and more information will follow.

As always, we love to engage with you on Instagram, X, Facebook, and the Georgia CECommunity. Follow us to connect with fellow members and stay engaged! Until next time, Happy Holidays!



Warmest Regards,

Veronica Williams

President, Georgia Unit
Council for Exceptional Children





GAEL Legislative Priorities

1. Professional Development for Literacy

Restore state funding to **1.5% of the base salary** to support professional development, emphasizing **literacy to support the goal and all components of HB 538**.

(FYI: currently it is funded at 0.9% and was funded at 1.5% until FY 2003)

2. Student Mental Health

With mental health center stage, provide funding for mental health support staff such as social workers, counselors, school psychologists, and mental health counselors. This could be addressed by **reducing the ratio for counselors, school psychologists and social workers**. *HB 283 was passed in 2013 to reduce the ratio for school psychologists by 2016, but no action has been taken.* The current, recommended and requested funding for student mental health professionals in Georgia is:

	GA's Current Funding Ratios	National Recommended Funding Ratios	Requested Funding Ratios
School Counselors	1:450	1:250	1:400
School Social Workers	1:2,475	1:250	1:2,475
School Psychologists	1:2,475	1:250	1:2,420

The recommended ratios are based on that of the American School Counselor Association, National Association of Social Workers, and National Association of School Psychologists. *(This would allow local school districts flexibility to hire additional counselors as they determine?)*

3. State Health Benefit Plan for Non-Certified Staff

Address the rising costs of SHBP for classified employees with an increase of funding to cover **50% of classified employees health care costs**.

The cost per month for non-certified employees has risen from \$746 in FY 16 to \$1,580 for FY 26.

4. Educator Workforce

Extend the end date of June 30, 2026 on HB 385 (retired teachers returning to work full time) and for flexibility for high-needs areas as defined by districts (rather than by RESAs) with all literacy positions considered.





2025 GAEL Winter Conference!

January 26-28, 2025

The Classic Center, Athens, Ga.

REGISTRATION OPEN

Elevating Public Education: Attitude Determines Altitude!

Keynote Speakers:

Kyle Maynard, American speaker, author, and mixed martial arts athlete

Chris Clark, Georgia Chamber of Commerce

Anthony Mohammed, Former principal and school culture expert

Mark Wilson, Former principal and author of Principal Matters!



Heart of Georgia RESA
and Central Georgia GLRS
Host
Skills 4 Life

The **Skills 4 Life** event, hosted by Heart of Georgia RESA and Central Georgia GLRS on October 24th and 25th in Dublin, Georgia, was an enriching experience designed to empower students with significant cognitive disabilities by providing them the opportunity to practice essential life and employability skills. Coordinated by Brittney Faircloth, Laurens County Schools Showcase Transition Program teacher and Riley Troili, Bleckley County Elementary third through fifth grade special needs teacher, the event aimed to create a supportive environment for skill development.

The first day focused on engaging activities for primary and middle school students, while the second day catered to middle and high school students, ensuring age-appropriate learning. Participants utilized task cards and concrete items to practice a variety of skills in the areas of food service, retail, nutritional, landscaping, health, fitness, janitorial, housekeeping, grocery shopping, finances and insurance, and skills with hands.

The event featured distinguished guests, including State School Superintendent Richard Woods and State Teacher of the Year Holly Witcher, who offered their support and encouragement. Community volunteers and local business representatives joined in to assist students throughout the various tasks, fostering a spirit of collaboration and community engagement.

Faircloth and Troili envision expanding Skills 4 Life to a state-wide initiative, aiming to reach more students and providing them with vital skills that can enhance their independence and employability. Their dedication, along with the support of RESA and GLRS, highlights the importance of inclusive educational opportunities for all students.





Support our 2024 G-CASE Fall Sponsors and Exhibitors

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Diamond:

Goalbook

Presence

Gold:

Greater Living Home Care

Parallel Learning

Stages Learning

USHA Software

TeachTown

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Chancelight Behavioral Health, Therapy, and Education

EPS Learning

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Go Solutions
Legion Mediation
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Sensory Room Solutions
Specialized Education Services, Inc.
The Stepping Stones Group
TouchMath

State Agency Exhibitors:

American Association of AdaptED Sports
Georgia Department of Education: GO-IEP
Georgia Department of Education State Schools Division
Georgia High School High Tech
Georgia Sensory Assistance Project
Georgia Southern University
TRS
USTA Georgia



**G-CASE is so appreciative of the Sponsors and Exhibitors who joined us
in Savannah.**

**Their contributions kept registration costs down
and allowed G-CASE to host special events
for SELDA, ADA, GaCEC, and the Advisory/Executive Boards.**

Information and Links: G-CASE Fall Sponsors

ABA Centers of America

ABA Centers of Georgia is making individualized and comprehensive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy more accessible than ever for those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

abacentersga.com/

ChanceLight Behavioral Health, Therapy, and Education

ChanceLight is the nation's leading provider of behavior health, therapy, and education solutions for children and young adults.

www.chancelight.com

EPS Learning

For over 70 years, EPS Learning has been providing evidence-based solutions aligned to the Science of Reading. Our comprehensive solutions empower teachers to support all students, from striving to those with characteristics of dyslexia, or those in need of enrichment.

<https://www.epslearning.com/>

Fun and Function

We provide sensory tools and school solutions

www.funandfunction.com

Goalbook

***CASE-Endorsed Product: [Toolkit](#)**

Goalbook Toolkit improves special education student outcomes by building teacher capacity to develop higher-quality IEPs and implement them with more effective specially designed instruction. It is an online solution for teachers that guides them to confidently identify student present levels, save time in developing meaningful standards-aligned goals, and successfully implement IEPs with instant access to research-based instructional strategies, classroom-ready resources, and tools to progress monitor.

<http://www.goalbookapp.com>

Greater Living Home Care

We provide in-home nursing and personal support services to children under age 21 with physical and medically fragile disabilities. We assist with bathing, grooming, feeding, turning/repositioning, wound care, medication administration, nursing services, and more.

www.greaterlivinghomecare.com

n2y

With n2y Everyone Can Learn. Join the nation's #1 solution in special education and transform your learners lives today!

<https://www.n2y.com/>

NWEA

HMH and NWEA believe in the transformative power of education, and are deeply focused on helping all kids learn

www.nwea.org

Parallel Learning

Parallel Learning is an experienced Related Services Provider with leading expertise in online School Psychologist, Speech Pathologist, Social Workers, and Special Education Teachers

<https://www.parallellearning.com/>

Presence

Presence is a leading provider of teletherapy to PreK-12 schools in the US, innovating how clinicians assess and address student special education and mental health needs through an elevated approach to teletherapy.

www.presence.com [Link to Video](#)

Information and Links: G-CASE Fall Sponsors

Continued

SSS (Presenting Sponsor)

Medicaid Consultants for 120 School Systems in Georgia

www.speced.org

Stages Learning

Provides a complete curriculum for learners with autism, cognitive and developmental delays and school readiness needs.

www.stageslearning.com

Study Smart Tutors

Study Smart Tutors works with schools and college access programs to provide in-school and after-school tutoring and intervention programming. Our tutors work with students from elementary school through college, supporting them in English, math, science, and language courses.

<https://studysmarttutors.com/>

TeachTown

Special Education Publishing/Ed-Tech Company provides educational software solutions for moderate to severe disabilities students. Evidence-based Special Education Curriculum, Software, and Services.

www.teachtown.com

USHA Software

Helping GA School districts with revenue, compliance and data

www.ushasoftware.com

University of West Georgia (Presenting Sponsor)

The Department of Special Education at the University of West Georgia leads the state in the number of initial and advanced special education certificates and degrees, known for its quality, innovation, and inclusive best practices. Our programs equip educators with the expertise to advocate for students with disabilities, fostering a more inclusive educational landscape and empowering leaders to drive change.

<https://www.westga.edu/academics/education/special-education/index.php>

Wilson Language Training

Structured literacy with evidence backed, multi-tiered reading system empowers students to become fluent, independent readers.

www.wilsonlanguage.com





2024-2025

G-CASE

Special Initiatives:

Special Education Administrator Development Academy
(ADA)

Coordinator Skills Institute (CSI)

SELDA Mentoring Program

Georgia Dyslexia Collaborative

Diversifying Special Education Leadership

Enhancing Partnership with GaCEC

G-CASE Promotes Professional Learning

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gcasega.schoolinsites.com



<https://www.casecec.org/>



<https://exceptionalchildren.org/>