



# G-CASE: Your Voice for Special Education

A unified voice promoting excellence among leaders for programs with disabilities.

## From Our President

*Dr. MaryKay Berry, G-CASE President 2025-2026*



### What a Conference!

Wow, THANK YOU!!! What an incredible few days we had in Savannah! Our Carnival-themed Fall Conference truly lived up to its tagline: *Education—The Greatest Show on Earth*. From the moment we kicked things off, the energy was electric.

After an AMAZING opening from the students from Effingham County, as I stood at the podium to welcome you all, I couldn't help but think: *This is why we do what we do*. Every conversation, every session, every laugh reminded me that compliance isn't just about rules—it's about relationships. It's about listening to parents, supporting teachers, providing quality, specially designed instruction, and creating opportunities for students with disabilities to thrive.

When we come together like this, we're not just checking boxes—we're building bridges. We're sharing ideas that make classrooms more inclusive, strategies that make timelines manageable, and solutions that make life better for kids and families. That's the heart of our work.

While there were MANY....here are a few highlights that stood out to me:

- **Phenomenal keynote presentations like the Clown Car of Case Law:** Beth & Reagan were hilarious as they not only scared us to death with the clown pictures but also provided us timely updates on recent rulings and what they mean for our day-to-day decisions.
- **AMAZING Breakout Sessions:** You all truly showed up and showed out! With over **50 Breakouts**, the variety was incredible. Each session delivered practical strategies and fresh insights—balancing the critical work of **compliance** with the equally important focus on **instruction**. From

legal updates and timelines to innovative teaching practices and behavior supports, every topic was designed to help us serve students and families better.

- **And let's not forget—the Carnival:** It wasn't just fun; it reminded us that even in the serious business of special education, we can celebrate, connect, recharge, and dance the night away. Those moments of laughter and networking strengthen the bonds that make our professional community so powerful. (*A special thank you to the vendors that participated!*)

So again, thank you—for showing up ready to learn, ready to share, and ready to lead with heart. Together, we're shaping a future where every student gets what they need to succeed.

What's next? (I am so glad you asked!!) Get ready for our **Spring Legal Conference**—coming this March! This event will dive deep into the latest legal updates, case law, and compliance strategies that impact special education. We'll bring you **expert-led sessions, real-world scenarios, practical tools**, and maybe even some **Legal Jeopardy** that will keep you on the edge of your seat while helping you navigate the ever-changing legal landscape with confidence.

Stay tuned for registration details and a sneak peek at the topics we'll cover. Trust me, you won't want to miss this one!



# From Our Executive Director

Sarah Burbach, Executive Director, G-CASE



I am in awe!

I have the privilege of working with the 20-member G-CASE Executive Board as they plan and participate in professional learning opportunities, conferences, webinars, presentations, Academies, Institutes, partnerships, GAEL events, legislative actions, and many, many other activities to support G-CASE and YOU.

This group meets for a three-day summer retreat and at least two other times during the year to review statistics, go over survey results, set the budget, and examine maps (locations of our members, places where Professional Learning is held, systems with people who attended conferences, etc.) to support the evidence-based decisions they will make for the new school year. And best of all, this group LISTENS. They listen to you to guide G-CASE in offering timely, needed professional learning. They listen while helping set legislative priorities. They listen to you when you're looking for teachers and funding. And then they plan!

This year, your Executive Board carefully proposed issues and speakers for the Special Education Development Academy (ADA). Then they moved on to Mental Health - still a hot topic- and set up a critical Mental Health Drive-In Conference in two locations so that all educators from across the state could attend. They kept hearing that everyone still needed Section 504 support, so Julie Weatherly was booked. They heard you when you listed topics you wished general education leaders knew more about – by conducting a webinar on special education funding, presenting a podcast on *“What Every Leader Should Know about Special Education,”* and leading a Breakout session at Summer GAEL *“Voices at the Table: Integrating Special Education Leadership into System-Wide Decision-Making.”* Next month at the Winter GAEL Conference, they will present *“Navigating IDEA’s Discipline Mandates for Students with Disabilities: Essential Knowledge for Administrators”* to general education leaders. They listened.

-continued

This Board also agreed not to raise the cost of membership or registration for any G-CASE event this year (even as venue, food, and speaker fees kept rising)! And then there was the G-CASE Carnival – a wonderful, fully-funded event designed to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of IDEA and YOU!

In January, G-CASE will elect a new **Vice President** ('26-'27) who will move up to President-Elect ('27-'28) and then to President ('28-'29), and **Treasurer** ('26-'28). Please consider running for one of these offices, serving on a G-CASE Committee, or representing your GLRS on the G-CASE Advisory Board. Being actively involved in your professional organizations is vital to your continued leadership growth.

G-CASE is dedicated to supporting you, and we sincerely need and value your experience, involvement, and expertise.



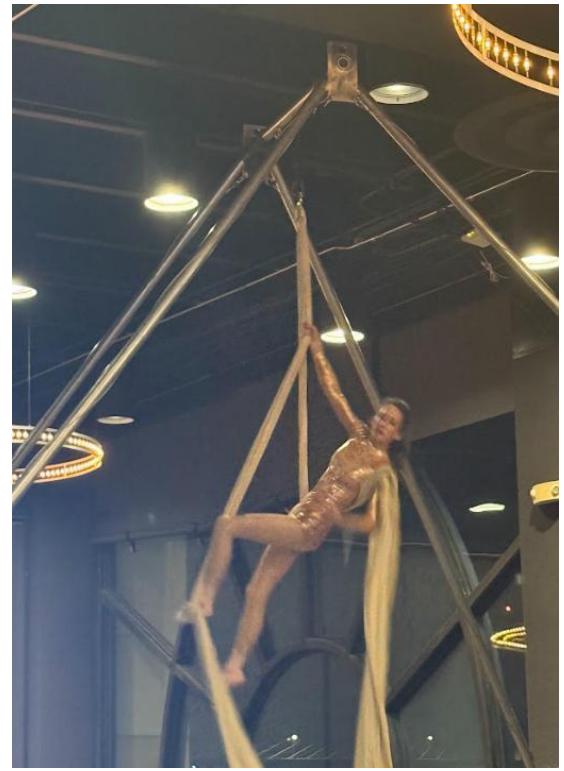
*G-CASE Executive Board*

# 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference Highlights

The **2025 G-CASE Fall Conference** combined INSPIRATION (Mickey Rowe, “From Special Education to Broadway!”), NEW KNOWLEDGE from nationally known speakers (John O’Connor, Angela Balsley, Diane Williams), SPECIALIZED SKILLS from state-wide leaders (52 Breakout Sessions!), CRITICAL LEGAL INFORMATION (Beth Morris, Reagan Sauls, MaryGrace Kittrell, Cullen McDonough, Caroline Scalf, Phil Hartley), and THRILLING ENTERTAINMENT (Effingham Middle School Chorus, Mary Jessica Hammes with Canopy Studios) with FUN (G-CASE Carnival) – the perfect, positive special education storm! We learned, we listened, we networked, we played, we ate, we visited, we discovered, and we shared! Visit the G-CASE website at [G-CASE.org](https://G-CASE.org) to review the presentations made available to us.



# 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference Highlights



**Yes, pictures are truly worth a thousand words!**



# 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference Highlights



*December, 2025 Edition*

## 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference Ambassadors



Led by G-CASE Ambassador Captain Larissa Beecher and GaCEC President Veronica Cooper, the G-CASE Conference Ambassadors worked behind the scenes to ensure that the 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference was a success. This year's Ambassadors were chosen from a strong list of over twenty-five applicants and assisted with registration, breakout sessions, the Silent Auction, G-CASE Carnival, door prizes, vendors, meals, and presenters. They "stepped right up" so that everything would be perfect!

Thank you to Angela Ellis, Kimberly Mazza, Memory Murphy, and Danette Rogers!

# 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference Sponsors

## **Signature Sponsor:**

The University of West Georgia

## **Presenting Sponsors:**

Goalbook

TeachTown

## **Diamond Sponsors:**

Presence

SES

## **Gold Sponsors:**

Amergi Educational Staffing

Bailey Education Group, LLC

Chancelight Behavioral Health, Therapy, and Education

Insights to Behavior

Lighthouse Therapy

Relay

## **Silver Sponsors:**

Allied Instructional Services

EPS Learning

Fun and Function

## **Bronze Sponsors:**

Central Reach

eLuma

HMH/NWEA

Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes

National Professional Resources

Pathful, Inc.

TouchMath and Classworks

# 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference Sponsors and Exhibitors

## Special Thanks

### Signature Sponsor

University of West Georgia

### SELD A Mentor Mingle

ADA/GaCEC Social

SES

### Executive Board Dinner

Goalbook

### Advisory Board Dinner

TouchMath and Classworks

### Peloton Bike Door Prize:

TouchMath and Classworks

### Tote Bags

TouchMath and Classworks

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Balloon Arch

Stages Learning

### Refreshment Break Sponsors

USTA

Respectful Ways

### SELD A Pre-Conference Legal Presentation

Parker Poe, Attorneys at Law

### Silent Auction Baskets and Door Prizes

GLRS, Vendors, Executive Board, and Creative G-CASE Members

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### **Door Prizes:**

Allied Instructional Services  
Stages Learning  
National Professional Resources  
Lindamood-Bell Processes  
American Association of Adapted Sports  
Proximity Learning  
The Stepping Stones Group  
Firelight Books  
Respectful Ways  
Bailey Educational Staffing  
Insights to Behavior

### **Carnival: Special Performances**

University of West Georgia

### **Carnival: Photo Booth**

GoalBook

### **Carnival: Games**

Educational Associates

GoalBook

SES

### **Carnival: DJ Booth**

RoboKind

### **Carnival: Signature Drink**

PAES Lab

### **Carnival: Popcorn**

Sensory Solutions

### **Carnival: Cotton Candy**

Blazer Works

# 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference Sponsors and Exhibitors

Special BRONZE Sponsors **TouchMath** and **Classworks** donated a new **PELOTON BIKE** at the end of the conference! Congratulations, Kitty Crawford!



**TOUCHMATH<sup>®</sup>**  
Classworks<sup>®</sup> **Wittly**  
by Classworks<sup>®</sup>

December, 2025 Edition

# 2026 G-CASE Professional Learning Opportunities

## Topics:

Understanding Addiction  
Adolescent Development  
Trauma and Addiction  
Behavioral Addiction



MENTAL HEALTH

## G-CASE Mental Health Drive-In Conference

*Navigating the Minds of Youth – Understanding, Supporting, Intervening, and Empowering*

**Presenters:**

**Dr. Amanda Giordano, UGA**  
**Tonya Plant, Northwest Georgia GLRS**

*This cutting-edge workshop is geared to Special and General Educators, Counselors, School Psychologists, Social Workers, and Administrators who work with youth*

**January 12, 2026**

Oconee County Schools Instructional Support Center, Watkinsville

**January 26, 2026**

Southwest Georgia GLRS, Albany

9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Cost: \$250 (Includes lunch, snacks, and beverages)

[Register Now!](#)

## Topics:

Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Programs  
Motivational Interviewing  
Early Intervening: Coordinated Supports



We are pleased to announce the second **G-CASE Mental Health Drive-In Conference**. This highly anticipated event, back by popular demand from educators across Georgia, will focus on strategies for **Navigating the Minds of Youth** through Understanding, Supporting, Intervening, and Empowering.

The conference will feature two distinguished speakers: University of Georgia professor, presenter, and author **Dr. Amanda Giordano**, and Northwest Georgia GLRS Director **Tonya Plant**.

This valuable professional development opportunity is open to special and general educators, counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and administrators who work with youth. Please forward this email to the people holding these positions in your system. The conference will be offered at **two locations** so that all educators have access to this timely, critical information.

Given the approaching date, we encourage all interested participants to **register promptly** to secure their attendance. Payment can be made following the conference.

Register at <https://gael.ps.membersuite.com/events/ViewEvent.aspx?contextID=e386dc0a-0078-cc57-c76a-0b49099f27a2>.

# 2026 G-CASE Professional Learning Opportunities

## SECTION 504

**\$250**

*(Includes a catered lunch, snacks, and drinks)*



For all general and  
special educators  
working with  
Section 504

**JOIN ATTORNEY JULIE WEATHERLY FOR AN  
IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF SECTION 504:  
BASIC AND ADVANCED REQUIREMENTS,  
PLANS, AND PRACTICAL PROCESSES**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026  
9:00-4:00**

**COASTAL PLAINS RESA  
245 N ROBINSON  
LENOX, GA**



Register at <https://gael.ps.membersuite.com/events/ViewEvent.aspx?contextID=e386dc0a-0078-c57c-a843-0b490a85b559>.

# 2026 G-CASE Professional Learning Opportunities

## G-CASE Spring Legal Conference

Join us face-to-face for our Special Education Legal Event of the Year!

The **2026 G-CASE Spring Legal Conference** is designed for all educational administrators, coordinators, teachers, psychologists, and others involved with educating students with disabilities. Presenters are state and nationally recognized legal professionals who specialize in special education law, along with state leaders providing updates on current legislation, GaDOE information, and more.

Practical, useful, timely, and needed information -- A conference you just can't miss!

**Monday – Wednesday, March 2, 3, and 4, 2026**

The Classic Center  
300 N. Thomas Street  
Athens, GA 30601

**Registration at (NO PRICE INCREASE!): 2026 Spring Legal Conference**  
Hotel Block Opens January 9<sup>th</sup>!



# Professional Learning: GaDOE/G-CASE Partnership: SELDA



G-CASE is proud to partner with the Georgia Department of Education to serve our first- and second-year directors through the long-running **SELDA** program. SELDA stands for the *Special Education Leadership Development Academy*, and it has provided information to our new directors on essential topics such as dispute resolution complaints, FBAs, BIPs, MDRs,

Prior Written Notice, special education certification, Assistive Technology, Adapted PE, FTE, Data Collecting and Reporting, Budget Development, Maintenance of Effort, Leadership, and Discipline....Wow! A lot to learn!

G-CASE sponsored their session, Legal 101, as a Pre-Conference activity with Beth Morris and Reagan Sauls, partners at Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein, Attorneys & Counselors at Law. Each participating SELDA member was presented with a Laminated Guide developed by CEC and CEDAR, which is full of “quick” information about High-Leverage Practices to guide Special Education professional development. G-CASE also provides year-long **mentor coaches** from the Advisory Council to first-year directors.



## National CASE Conference

G-CASE President Dr. MaryKay Berry, President-Elect and National CASE Treasurer Dr. Damita James, and G-CASE Executive Director Sarah Burbach represented you at the National CASE Board of Directors Meeting and attended sessions throughout the week at the **National CASE Conference** in Oklahoma City in November. Several G-CASE members also shared best practices during concurrent sessions.



The conference celebrated **50 Years OF IDEA** with keynote topics covering “*Leading in Times of Uncertainty*,” “*50 Years of IDEA: A Celebration of Resilience and Progress*,” “*Respectful Leadership: Elevating Outcomes Through Quality*,” and a Federal Update. Concurrent Sessions covered issues on Transition, Student/Staff Wellness, Legal Issues, Instructional Excellence, Innovating for Success, Human Resources/Empowering Teams, Forging Partnerships, Exploring Hot Topics, Educational Leadership, Building Strong Foundations, Conflict Resolution, and Advancing Equity for Students with Disabilities.

# Georgia Wins BIG at the National CASE Conference!

## Lynn Freeman Named the 2025 National CASE Outstanding Early Career Administrator



PRESS RELEASE FROM NATIONAL CASE:

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) proudly announces **Lynn Freeman** as the recipient of the **2025 Outstanding Early Career Administrator Award**, honoring her remarkable leadership, innovation, and impact in the early years of her service as a special education administrator in Pulaski County, Georgia.

In just a few years, Mrs. Freeman has demonstrated a powerful commitment to equity, excellence, and empowerment for students with disabilities. Her leadership has transformed systems, built collaborative school and community partnerships, and improved outcomes for students and families across her district.

### **Elevating Special Education Systems**

Mrs. Freeman has streamlined Pulaski County's special education program to ensure greater efficiency, clarity, and alignment with student needs. Under her guidance, staff are equipped with up-to-date legal knowledge, instructional strategies, and best practices. She re-delivers key professional learning from across the state to ensure her team is prepared, informed, and empowered to represent the system's vision.

Her efforts have led to **increased student assessment scores, greater IEP meeting engagement, and stronger access to appropriate accommodations**. Local leaders have recognized her extraordinary impact on system-wide improvement.

*-continued on next two pages*

## **Student-Centered Innovation**

A champion for student empowerment, Mrs. Freeman expanded the **ASPIRE Ambassadors Program** to include student leaders from elementary, middle, and high schools. These ambassadors are trained to self-advocate and, in turn, support their peers—a program that continues to grow under her guidance.

She also played a key role in establishing a **work-based training program** at Hawkinsville High School. By partnering students with departments across the school, the program equips them with essential life and employment skills to support post-graduation success.

## **Early Learning and Inclusion**

Understanding the importance of early intervention, Mrs. Freeman led efforts to begin serving the **three-year-old population** in an inclusive pre-kindergarten setting. This move reflects her strong belief in equitable, collaborative approaches from the earliest stages of learning.

Her leadership has ensured that 100% of students with disabilities in Pulaski County participated in state assessments, met LRE targets, and avoided high suspension rates—clear markers of her inclusive, effective approach.

## **Professional Leadership and State Engagement**

Mrs. Freeman is a standout leader in Georgia-CASE. She serves as **Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee**, is an active participant on the **G-CASE Advisory and Executive Boards**, and has attended and contributed to more than **two dozen statewide professional learning events** since 2022.

She is also a graduate of both the **Special Education Administrator Development Academy (ADA)** and the **Special Education Leadership Development Academy**, where her final project—“**The Road to Transition**”—has already had a measurable impact, leading to a 100% postsecondary engagement rate for FY24 graduates with disabilities.

## **A Trusted Community Leader**

Outside the school system, Mrs. Freeman plays an active role in the **Family Connection Collaborative, Heart of Georgia Transition Alliance**, and even serves as a Unit Clerk at

Bleckley County Memorial Hospital, where she supports individuals in crisis. Her leadership extends to planning events such as the **ICAN Conference** and the **Champion Awards Gala**, and she is a familiar, supportive presence at school and community events alike.

## **Empowering a Future of Possibilities**

Lynn Freeman is more than a rising star—she is a force for positive change in special education. Her work represents the very best of what early-career administrators can achieve, combining vision, compassion, and a relentless commitment to students. CASE is proud to recognize her leadership with the 2025 Outstanding Early Career Administrator Award.

Congratulations, Lynn! You Make Georgia PROUD!



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## 2025-2026 Lillie Moncus G-CASE Special Education Administrator of the Year

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.

In front of family, friends, fellow directors, and colleagues, who were livestreaming from Oconee County, **Suzanne Korngold**, Chief Special Education Officer for Oconee County Schools, was awarded this honor at the 2025 G-CASE Fall Conference. Her nominators wrote that “quantifying a good leader is a difficult thing to do; some define good leaders by the results, some by the example they set along the way, and some through the impact they have on those they inspire. At the end of the day, Suzanne Korngold will stop at nothing to serve those whom she supports, and her tireless dedication to this vision, which would burn out the will of most any other, has ensured Oconee County’s special education programs are where they are today.” Congratulations, Suzanne!



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# Georgia CEC

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS OPEN NOW!



We are looking for our Georgia Peaches (teachers) to showcase their exceptional expertise at our GaCEC Conference on June 5-6, 2026. Click the link below to submit a proposal to present.

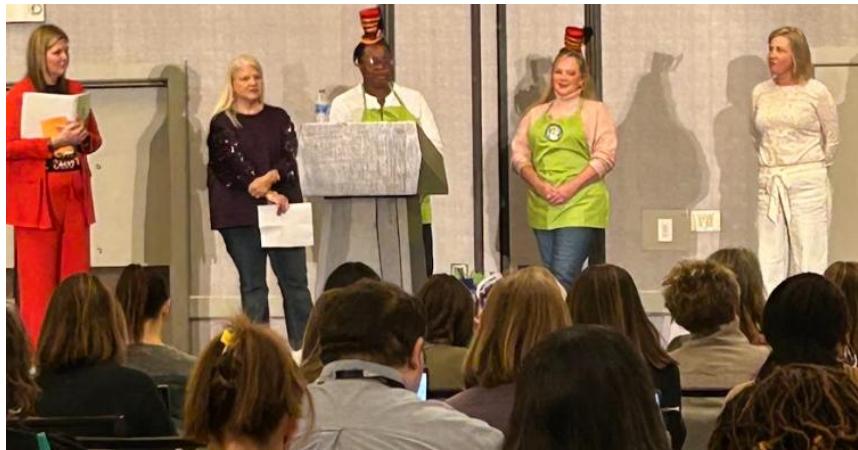
[GaCEC Proposal](#)



## GaCEC Elections Coming Soon

### *Vice President-Elect and Secretary 2026-2028*

GaCEC will soon begin the election process for the positions of **Vice President Elect** and **Secretary**. Individuals with strong leadership skills and a commitment to advancing our organization's mission are encouraged to submit their



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# Upcoming Events with Georgia CEC



## CEC 2026 Convention & Expo

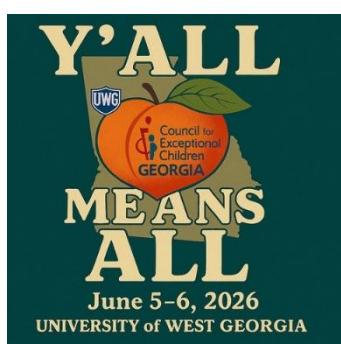
March 11-14, 2026 | Salt Lake City, Utah

[Click Here to Register](#)



## Exceptional Children's Week

April 12, 2026 - April 16, 2026



## 2026 GaCEC Annual Conference

June 5-6, 2026 | University of West Georgia

Mark your calendars and save the date. We want to see each of our 1,000 members there!

*More information coming soon*

# Georgia CEC 2025-2026 Meeting Dates

## Meeting Dates

### Executive Board - 9:00 AM

- August 16, 2025
- October 4, 2025
- February 7, 2026
- April 18, 2026

### Governing Board - 9:00 AM

- September 13, 2025
- November 15, 2025
- January 10, 2026
- March 21, 2026
- May 23, 2026

### General Body (All Members) - 10:00 AM

- October 4, 2025
- March 21, 2026

**All meetings are virtual:**

<https://georgiacyber.zoom.us/j/99728153883>

Meeting ID: 997 2815 3883

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# G-CASE Call for Nominations for Officers

## BE INVOLVED!

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, 2026. Members 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) and Treasurer (two-year term; the Treasurer shall oversee the development of the G-CASE budget by the Executive Director each year and submit it at the annual business meeting following approval by the Executive Board. They shall monitor and ensure that an accurate record of receipts and expenditures is maintained by the Executive Director. They shall present a report at each meeting.)

These two positions are vital to G-CASE as we continue to grow by providing professional learning to our members and partners and by 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 convenes to form a unified group of professional colleagues and friends working toward shared goals to achieve the best 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.

Officeholders will receive comprehensive training and be supported by the Executive Director, President, and other members of the Executive Board. The time spent on G-CASE activities (which is really not very time-consuming) will only enhance the work you are already doing for students with disabilities. You can (*and should!*) do this!

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

Nomination applications have been extended to **December 19, 2025**.

[Link to G-CASE Officer Nomination Application \(2026\)](#)

## 2026 Winter GAEL



[Attendee Registration](#)

[Draft Agenda](#)

Members of the G-CASE Executive Board will be presenting a Breakout Session on *Navigating IDEA's Discipline Mandates for Students with Disabilities: Essential Knowledge for Administrators*, and John O'Connor will present *Increasing the Achievement of Students with Disabilities (and All Students)*.

**Let's have a strong G-CASE Contingency represented at  
Winter GAEL!**

# 2026 GAEL Legislative Priorities

GAEL and the affiliate/associate organizations (GSSA/GAESP/GAMSP/GASSP/GACIS/G-CASE/GASPA/SSTAGE/GELFA), along with PAGE and GSBA, work together each year on current legislative priorities, as we have found strength in numbers when advocating for public education at the Gold Dome. The GAEL Legislative Committee (made up of representatives from each affiliate/associate organization – Dr. Ashly Hunter and Lynn Freeman, co-chairs of the G-CASE Legislative Committee, represented G-CASE) met numerous times this fall and presented the legislative priorities at the October 23 GAEL Board of Directors meeting. The legislative priorities presented below were approved by the GAEL Board for the 2026 Legislative Session:

## **Reduce Chronic Absenteeism**

Fund school social workers at a ratio of one social worker per 1,856 students and expand mental health grants to elementary schools.

## **Partner to Support State Health Benefit Plan for Non-Certified Staff**

Renew the partnership between local districts and the state to provide health insurance for non-certified staff by funding 25% of the per-member-per-month cost of the SHBP for non-certified staff for all districts and up to 50% of these costs for low-wealth districts.

## **Strengthen the Educator Workforce**

Reauthorize Return to Work via HB 372 and/or SB 150 to sustain its impact;

Revise the end date of the Teacher Tax Credit to December 31, 2030, incorporate special education, math, reading, writing, and English language arts in the definition of high-need subject areas, and allow school districts to determine their high-need subject areas.

Provide need-based stipends to students who are enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate teacher education program approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and are participating in student teaching as required by their teacher education program.

# 2026 G-CASE Early Career Special Education Administrator Award

## NOMINATION:

*Each year, G-CASE presents the Early Career Special Education Administrator Award to a Special Education Administrator with five or fewer years of experience administering special education programs and/or services who has demonstrated exemplary leadership and service. This individual characterizes resourcefulness, compassion, and professionalism as a leader.*

### Qualifications:

The Candidate must:

- be a current Special Education Director in his/her first five 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

### Nomination Requirements:

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.

- Completed nomination form (Next Page)
- Narrative detailing exemplary service as a Special Education Director (two-page max)
- Three letters of support

**Deadline for Nominations: February 5, 2026**

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# G-CASE

*Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education*

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## 2026 G-CASE Early Career Special Education Administrator Award

*(Please include the following information)*

Name of Nominee:

School System:

Position:

Work Address:

Email Address:

Work Phone:

Cell Phone:

Number of Years in Education:

Number of Years in Current Position:

Is the Nominee a Current Member of G-CASE and CEC/CASE? (Feel free to contact Sarah Burbach, G-CASE Executive Director at [sburbach@gael.org](mailto:sburbach@gael.org) if unsure)

Name of Person(s) Making Nomination:

Email Address of Nominator:

Work Phone of Nominator:

Cell Phone of Nominator:

Relationship to Nominee:

Include a narrative detailing exemplary service as a Special Education Director (two-page max) and at least two letters of support.

Email Application/Nomination to: [brad.bowling@lakeoconeeacademy.org](mailto:brad.bowling@lakeoconeeacademy.org)

# 2025-2026 G-CASE Executive Board

Dr. MaryKay Berry	President	Executive Director, SEC Fulton County Schools
Dr. Damita James	President-Elect	GLRS Director Middle Georgia RESA
Sean Cooper	Vice-President	Director West GA GLRS
Larissa Beecher	Secretary	GLRS Coordinator Middle Georgia RESA
Dr. Kirsti-Lee Arrington	Treasurer	Director, Student Services Houston County Schools
Dr. Brad Bowing	Immediate Past-President	Executive Director Lake Oconee Academy
Dr. Cindy Felkins	CEC Representative	Director of Student Support Services and Federal Programs Bleckley County Schools
Greg McElwee	Parliamentarian	Senior Director Northwest GA RESA
Open	Professional Learning	Open
Dr. Tris Gilland	ADA Facilitator President Emeritus	Chief of Student Services Marietta City Schools
Dr. Ashly Hunter	Co-Chair, Legislative Committee	Special Education Director Effingham County Schools
Lynn Freeman	Co-Chair, Legislative Committee	Director of Student Services Pulaski County Schools
Tonya Plant	Membership	GLRS Director Northwest GA
Kitty Crawford	Communications	Director of Exceptional Education Troup County Schools
Charles Kelley	Strategic Plan	Director of Special Education Griffin-Spalding County Schools
Jenny Rooks	Co-Chair Research and Innovation	Director of Instructional Student Support Monroe County Schools
Dr. Katie Lowry	Co-Chair Research and Innovation	Director-Student Services Lumpkin County
Tiera Bowen	Policy and Procedures	Special Programs Director Putnam County Charter Schools
Dr. Charity Roberts	GaDOE Liaison	State Director (IDEA) GaDOE
Belinda Tiller	SELDIA Liaison	Program Manager IDEA GaDOE
Sarah Burbach	Executive Director	G-CASE

## 2026 SAVE THE DATES

Deadline for G-CASE Officer Nominations	December 19, 2025
G-CASE Mental Health Drive-In Conference: <i>Navigating the Minds of Youth</i>	
Oconee County Schools	January 12, 2026
Southwest GA RESA	January 26, 2026
G-CASE Drive-In Conference: Section 504 with Julie Weatherly Coastal Plains RESA	February 9, 2026
Special Education Administrator Development Academy (ADA) with John O'Connor	January 14, 2026
Special Education ADA FY27 Applications Available	January 31, 2026
Winter GAEL Athens	February 1-3, 2026
PAGE Day on Capitol Hill Atlanta	February 17, 2026
G-CASE Spring Legal Conference Athens	March 2-4, 2026
International CEC Convention Salt Lake City, Utah	March 11-14, 2026
Exceptional Children's Week	April 12-16, 2026
2026 GaCEC Annual Conference	June 5-6, 2026
G-CASE Fall Conference Hyatt, Savannah	November 18-20, 2026

## 2025-2026 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

Besty Aimsworth, North GA GLRS

Cheryl Handley, Metro East GLRS

Trina Smith, Metro West GLRS

Tammy Shirley, Northeast GA GLRS

Chrissy Dement, West Central GLRS

Catherine Brown, Metro South GLRS

Jenny Rooks, Middle GA GLRS

Dr. Meesha Mathis, Oconee GLRS

Sharard Pritchett, East Georgia GLRS

Kristen Stokes, West GA GLRS

Alicia Hartley, East Central GLRS

Mary Susan Arnold, Southeast GA GLRS

Mindy Yanzetich, Coastal Area GLRS

Sommer Clark, Southwest GA GLRS

Mindell Downing, South GA/Coastal Plains GLRS

Sarah McIntosh, South Central GLRS

*Dr. Damita James and Sean Cooper, G-CASE Executive Board Liaisons*



*December, 2025 Edition*

## G-CASE LIVE!

If you're sitting in the bus line trying to get to an IEP meeting, waiting to pick up your own children, or traveling by yourself, you'll want to tune in to **GAEL UnscriptED**, a brand-new podcast designed to "elevate the voices of Georgia's educational leaders and partners in public education." New episodes air every Monday morning, and you can listen on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever you stream.



Recently, G-CASE President Dr. MaryKay Berry and President-Elect Damita James were guests on the GAEL podcast, where they presented "What Every Leader Should Know about Special Education." This podcast has become a "must hear" for every general education leader in Georgia!

[Link to GAEL Podcast](#)



## G-CASE LIVE(Streamed)!

G-CASE was invited to participate in the Online GAEL Finance Series, offering a free webinar to help district and school leaders strengthen their understanding of special education funding, FTE, reporting, and allotments. G-CASE President Dr. MaryKay Berry and G-CASE Research and Innovation Committee Co-Chair Dr. Katie Lowry presented "Understanding the Complexity of Special Education Coding" to a large, livestreamed audience consisting of general and special education leaders. GAEL reported that they have received "lots of texts and emails from people around the state that were very appreciative."

!



The image is a promotional graphic for the Online GAEL Finance Series. It features a blue header with the 'gael' logo and the text 'ONLINE GAEL FINANCE SERIES'. Below this, a green section contains the text: 'GAEL, in partnership with GSSA and affiliates, is offering free webinars this fall to help district and school leaders strengthen their understanding of finance, funding, and reporting.' A red arrow points to the 'UPCOMING:' section, which lists five webinars with their dates and times. At the bottom, a green bar encourages registration.

ONLINE  
**GAEL**  
**FINANCE**  
**SERIES**

GAEL, in partnership with GSSA and affiliates, is offering free webinars this fall to help district and school leaders strengthen their understanding of finance, funding, and reporting.

UPCOMING:

- Mastering CPI Reporting: Strategies for Accuracy and Funding Success: September 22, 2025 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
- Understanding the Complexity of Special Education Coding: September 23, 2025 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
- The Allotment Sheet: What Are You Earning and What Do You Have?: September 26, 2025 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
- Federal Programs Overview: October 9, 2025 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

**REGISTER TODAY!**  
FREE FOR ALL GAEL MEMBERS!!

# 50 Years of IDEA: Reflecting on Progress, Purpose, and Possibility

Past G-CASE President, Lillie Moncus Outstanding Special Education Administrator, and retired CASE Executive Director, **Dr. Luann Purcell**, was asked to share her insights as educators commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of IDEA. Dr. Purcell “reflected on how IDEA has transformed the landscape of education over the past five decades – guaranteeing access, inclusion, and opportunity for millions of students with disabilities.”

Bring up this conversation to celebrate the progress we have made and the challenges we still face (teacher shortages, funding, litigation, and more). Share it with your staff. Our history shows progress, purpose, and endless possibilities!

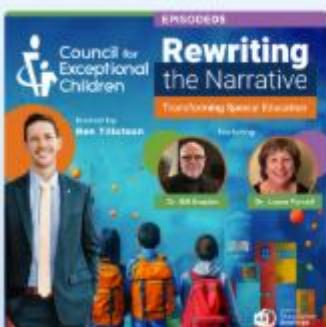
## Rewriting the Narrative

An original podcast from the Council for Exceptional Children that puts a spotlight on the real life experiences shaping the world of special education.

Listen on:



ALL EPISODES



2 days ago

### 50 Years of IDEA: Reflecting o...



Likes Download 107 Share

[Rewriting the Narrative Link](#)



# 2025-2026

## G-CASE

### Special Initiatives:

Special Education Administrator Development Academy

Coordinator Skills Institute

SELD A Mentoring Program

Enhancing Partnership with GaCEC

Diversifying Special Education Leadership

Engaging College and University Professors of Special Education as G-CASE Partners and Members

**G-CASE advocates for improved outcomes and services for students with disabilities by supporting and empowering administrators of special education**



# G-CASE

*Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education*

**2025-2028 Strategic Plan**

## VISION

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

## MISSION

- Promote professional learning
- Promote and enhance high-quality leadership
- Impact legislation and policy

## PURPOSE

G-CASE advocates for improved outcomes and services for students with disabilities by supporting and empowering administrators of special education

## BELIEF

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access should be evident in our leadership, our classrooms, and our communities. G-CASE is committed to empowering educational leaders to create schools where every voice is valued, every identity is respected, and every learner thrives.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## Provide performance-based professional learning

- To build the knowledge capacity of members to provide improved services for students with disabilities
- To expand the leadership skills of all members through quality, purposeful professional learning opportunities
- To communicate timely, accurate information that will support improved services for students with disabilities
- To value the experience and expertise of Past-Presidents and G-CASE-award recipients in the design, implementation, and presentation of professional learning activities

## Promote and enhance high-quality leadership

- To develop and enhance the leadership skills of new members at all levels of administration by strengthening the pipeline from teacher to director
- To increase, honor, and celebrate membership in G-CASE (state special education professional leadership organization) by ensuring continuous learning, research, innovation, member loyalty, retention, and engagement
- To increase membership in CEC/CASE (international special education professional leadership organizations) by offering efficient conference registration and by raising awareness of the specified benefits of belonging to a professional organization

## Impact legislation and policy

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

## VISIT US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



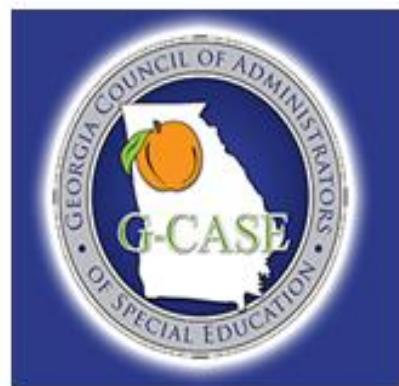
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#GCASE2022



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



<https://exceptionalchildren.org/>