

Thomasville City Schools ~ ESE Department

# The Connector



A Bi-Annual Parent Mentor Newsletter providing:  
Information, Resources, Support & Education for Parents of Special Needs Children



There are months dedicated to bring awareness to various issues, illness, etc. Throughout the issue, you will find spotlights of these themes. I will list below a few that have passed, but are still important to remember:

**August:** Children's Eye Health & Safety

**September:** National Sickle Cell

**October:** Down's Syndrome Awareness, National ADHD Awareness, World Mental Health

## This Year we celebrate 20 Years of our Partnership!

The Parent Mentor Partnership was founded in 2002 when six school districts partnered with the Georgia Department of Education Division for Special Education Services and Support to hire parent mentors to infuse family engagement into school and district activities. The mentors, who would serve as members of their special education leadership teams, were funded partially by the

GADOE and partially by the school district. *Mentors were responsible for providing information to parents of students with disabilities to assist them in navigating the special education system and in identifying activities that could help improve outcomes for their children. They also supported teachers and administrators in planning and implementing activities that would support family involvement.*

Modeled after the Ohio Parent Mentor Program

and led by the GA DOE Special Education Family Engagement Specialist, the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership quickly became a model for families and schools working together to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. *Today, the Partnership has grown to nearly 100 parent mentors who partner with special education directors in over 80 school districts to embed family engagement into school and district initiatives.*



A STUDENT-LED IEP INITIATIVE

ASPIRE provides the student with the opportunity to develop self-determination skills. Self-determination skills are a combination of attitudes and abilities that lead students to set goals for themselves, take the initiative to reach these goals and make their own choices.

Have you heard of the phrase, "Self-Determination"? Do you know it relates to your

child's IEP and educational success?

The GA DOE offers **FREE** ASPIRE videos for parents. They come in a series of 4 modules (5-8 minutes each) to provide parents with information about their student's participation in the ASPIRE program. I would recommend each parent of a Special Needs student view them. Please go to:

<https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special->

[Education-Services/Pages/ASPIRE-Videos.aspx](https://www.gadoe.org/Education-Services/Pages/ASPIRE-Videos.aspx)

Module #1: Introduction to ASPIRE

Module #2: Overview of an IEP (Individual Education Program and IGP (Individual Graduation Plan)

Module #3: Participation in ASPIRE

Module #4: Next Steps

You also have the option of printing up the PowerPoint handout of each module for your personal reference.

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### World Diabetes Day

became an official United Nations Day in 2006 with the passage of United Nation Resolution 61/225. Recognized **14**

**November, the birthday of Sir Frederick Banting**, who co-discovered insulin along with Charles Best in 1922.

There is a Support Group serving Valdosta, Tifton and surrounding areas. If you are interested contact JDRF at 404.420.590 or [georgia@jdrf.org](mailto:georgia@jdrf.org)

**November is American Diabetes Month**



November is Epilepsy Awareness Month. For any information, contact Epilepsy Foundation Georgia toll free at 800.527.7105.

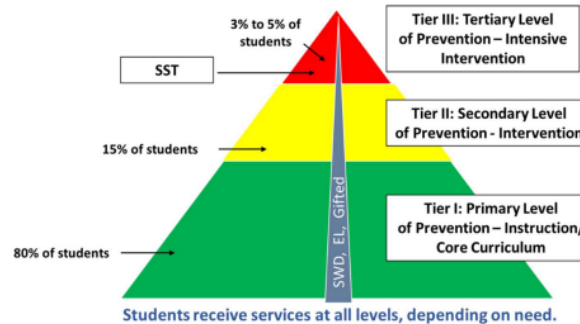
## The World of Technology

Things have drastically changed with the Pandemic. With the limited contact, there have been meetings held virtually, with participation by video or telephone.

The normal signature methods have changed to the digital/electronic

platform. With that being said, several of you have received either emails or a text with the following message, **“Thomasville ESE Department has sent you a document to review and sign. Please click below and sign your document.”** I have

reached out to a few parents to assist with completion of their digital signature and would like to know, who would be interested in a training on this electronic process? If you are interested in a training, please send me a text with your name to 229.421.0048.



### Clarifying the process for students receiving Services...

Each school has a SST Coordinator. This person conducts a meeting with the teachers and appropriate personnel to discuss Parent's concerns and implement interventions.

During the Tier process, the SST Team and Parent(s)/Guardians discuss the next steps to assist the student in their academics and is based on the individual student's needs.



Hands and Hearts for Horses is a Premiere Accredited therapeutic horseback riding center through PATH Intl. that provides unique therapeutic services to individuals with a variety of special needs. Their clients often have limited access to specialized physical activities and limited resources. The populations they serve include, but are not limited

to, individuals with autism spectrum disorder (including Asperger syndrome), Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and traumatic brain injuries. Therapeutic riding is documented to help improve gross and fine motor skills, cognitive abilities and general well-being. They often hear from parents and teachers that riders become stronger both physically and mentally and are able to be more successful in day-

to-day functioning as a result of therapeutic riding lessons.

Parents can individually schedule their child to participate by contacting Jilynn at 229.551.0086 or email her at: [jilynn@handsandheartsforhorses.com](mailto:jilynn@handsandheartsforhorses.com)



## December 2 is recognized as National Special Education Day

On December 2nd, National Special Education Day commemorates the anniversary of the nation's first federal special education law. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was signed into law on November 29, 1975. President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

IDEA made education available to all American children and this day honors the progress that has been made in special education. Before IDEA, many individuals with disabilities received little to no education. Schools were not required to make accommodations for children with disabilities. While some states offered special schools, the education and resources were not necessarily equal. Additionally,

many parents couldn't afford to send their children away to a special school.

The law stipulated that children with disabilities had a right to the same free education that every other child had access to. Between the ages of 3 and 21, there are 13 different areas where children may qualify under the IDEA for services. IDEA was instrumental in increasing graduation rates for students with disabilities.



Please check with your child's doctor to see if their disability qualifies you for the portable place card to transport your child.



International Day of Persons with Disabilities  
3 DECEMBER

Theme for IDPD 2021: "Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world."



A pass is your ticket to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites. Each pass covers entrance fees at national parks and national wildlife refuges as well as standard amenity fees (day use fees) at national forests and grasslands, and at lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A pass covers entrance, standard amenity fees and day use fees for a driver and all passengers in a personal vehicle at per vehicle fee areas (or up to four adults at sites that charge per person). **Children age 15 or under**



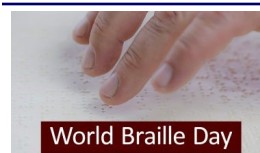
Easterseals offers Students and Adults with disabilities the opportunity to live, learn, work and play as a vital member of their own community. They have a few programs available:

- **Out-of-Home Respite Care.** This is offered under Family Support. Please contact Cathy Jenkins if you are interested in this service at 229.439.7061 ext. 1222
- **Vocational Services.** If you are interested in

more info contact Kimberly Moore-Willis at 229.439.7061 ext. 1231

- **Adult Day Program.** Unfortunately due to low enrollment numbers, this program is no longer available in Thomasville. If you have reliable transportation to commute back and forth, your child may receive services in Albany, Tifton or Vienna. For more information contact Daphne Jackson, Director of Adult Services at 800.365.4583 or email her at:

[djackson@swga-easterseals.org](mailto:djackson@swga-easterseals.org)

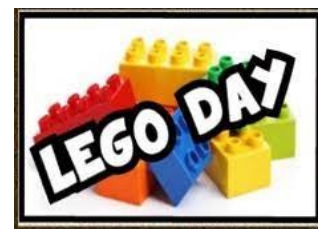


World Braille Day is observed every year on **January 4<sup>th</sup>** to raise awareness about how Braille plays a significant role in the complete realization of human rights in the lives of blind and partially sighted people.

## Thomas County Public Library System (TCPLS)

As most of you are aware, the library has offered reading groups in the past. They are currently in the process of trying to resume all of their face to face reading, but currently only have Thursday Storytime at 10 a.m. available.

On November 9, they will be having an After School Lego Day. All events are on a First-come-First Serve basis. For more information on joining any of their programs, please call **Amanda to reserve your slot at 229.225.5252.**





## BEYOND THE DIPLOMA

❑ Begin planning for your child's transition to life after high school as early as possible. This includes making choices about and advocating for the types of classes your child will take so that he/she can get a regular high school diploma if possible. If you wait until your child is in middle school or high school to try to get "on track" for a regular diploma, it will be too late!!

❑ Help build your child's self-determination and self-advocacy skills. Help your child learn how to talk about his/her disability and to ask for any support or accommodations that he/she needs.

❑ Help your child develop social relationships and opportunities for recreation. These are important to help connect your child with the community where he/she lives and can provide a wider network of people who can support your child after high school.

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❑ You and your child should bring suggestions to the transition planning meeting about what your goals are for life after high school. Your vision and your child's vision for the future should help drive the IEP goals for your child.

❑ Consider what your child wants to do with his or her life. What are his/her dreams and goals? Does he/she want to go to college or to get a job? Where does he/she want to live and with whom?

❑ Make sure your child is learning skills that he/she will need for jobs and for life after high school. These might include things like asking for help, accepting directions and feedback from others, and dealing with conflict. He/she also

needs to know how to be on time, the importance of good hygiene, and dressing appropriately for different settings such as work and social events.

❑ If your child plans to go to college, is he or she taking the courses needed to meet the college entrance requirements?

❑ If your child will go on to college or technical school, he/she will need to learn about what supports may be available from that school. Ask who to contact for disability support services at the school your child will attend. Postsecondary programs are required to provide accommodations to students with disabilities, but they are not required to modify the course work. Your child will have to provide documentation of his/her disability and will have to request the accommodations that are needed.

❑ Start to become knowledgeable about the protections provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which will apply to your child after high school.

- Parent to Parent of Georgia  
770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038  
[www.parenttoparentofga.org](http://www.parenttoparentofga.org)
- Georgia Department of Education, Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports 404 656-3963 or 800-311-3627 and ask to be transferred to Special Education [http://www.gadoe.org/ci\\_exceptional.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx)
- Georgia Department of Education Implementation Manual  
[http://www.gadoe.org/ci\\_exceptional.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx)?PageReq=CIEXCImpMan (See chapter on evaluations and reevaluations.) For additional resources: Contact the Special Education Director for your school system.
- The Georgia Transition Manual  
[http://www.gadoe.org/ci\\_exceptional.aspx?PageReq=CIEXCTransition](http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx?PageReq=CIEXCTransition)



- Autism Society of Georgia  
[www.autismsocietyga.org](http://www.autismsocietyga.org)  
844-404-2742
- CBAY WAIVER  
[CBAYQuestions@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:CBAYQuestions@dhr.state.ga.us)  
404-657-2103

*Serves children and youth, birth through age 21, with serious emotional and behavior issues.*

- Innovative Health Foundation Clinical Scholarship Program

[Innovativehealthfoundation.org/home](http://Innovativehealthfoundation.org/home)

*Innovative Health Foundation provides clinical scholarships to fund direct services for children with developmental disabilities such as assessments, medical treatment, education, and therapeutic services.*

- Dyslexia: Understood.org  
Dyslexia Network of Southwest Georgia/Kristy Cox 229-220-1114 [kristyc1976@gmail.com](mailto:kristyc1976@gmail.com)  
Amanda West 229-403-8627  
[dyslexianetworksw-ga@gmail.com](mailto:dyslexianetworksw-ga@gmail.com) or [facebook.com/DyslexiaNetworkSouthwestGeorgia/](https://www.facebook.com/DyslexiaNetworkSouthwestGeorgia/)



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