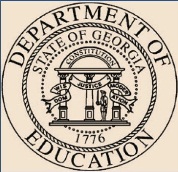
“Making Education Work for all Georgians”





The Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership (GaPMP)

An Initiative of the Georgia Department of Education, (GaDOE), Division for Special Education Services and Supports

FY15 Rookie Training Manual

A Training Tool for New Parent Mentors & Administrators

2014-2015 School Year

MISSION: To Build Effective Family, School, and Community Partnerships That Lead to Greater Achievement for All Students, Especially Those with Disabilities.

OBJECTIVE: To Impact Student Achievement through Family Engagement Strategies

*Sailing the Seven C’s….*

Collaborating *\** Convening \*Community Building \*Communicating *\**Committing \* Coalescing \* Capacity Building \*



A Family, School and

**\**

Community Engagement Partnership Established in 2001 by the Georgia Department of

Education

**INTRODUCTION**



The Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership (GaPMP) is celebrating 13 years of working together to increase achievement for all students, especially those with disabilities. The

Partnership, started in late 2001 by Phil Pickens, Special Education Director, Georgia Department of Education, (GaDOE), with Family Engagement Specialist Patti Solomon and a small group of parents and administrators, now boasts more than 90 local school

districts reaching more than 75 percent of Georgia families raising children with learning, behavioral and/or physical challenges. In just the past three years alone, Parent Mentors charted more than one million contacts.

Directed and supported by the Division for Special Education Services and Supports (DSESS), the Partnership includes more than 120 administrators and 100 Parent Mentors. The parent leaders, moms and dads of children with disabilities, are hired by local school districts, state schools and the Department of Juvenile Justice to work with families, school teams, teachers, and the community. The goal is to build a bridge of communication between home and school that leads to more successful outcomes for students. Parent Mentors partner with families to increase their engagement in education, address individual concerns and also to support initiatives designed to improve all children’s achievement levels. Although the Partnership under the leadership of the DSESS hosts a statewide conference each fall, it is unique how the Parent Mentor agenda is locally driven, which allows each program to meet the needs of its unique area. The DSESS also coordinates regional meetings four times a year and typically

offers an annual University Session specific to Parent Mentor’s leadership training needs.

Mentors do many things such as: build connections for families in the community; concentrate on the transition needs of middle and high school students as well as pre- kindergarten students; lead task forces; organize training sessions; collaborate with teachers; serve as leaders on community boards; collaborate with Title I Parent Involvement Coordinators; and create family engagement activities in schools.

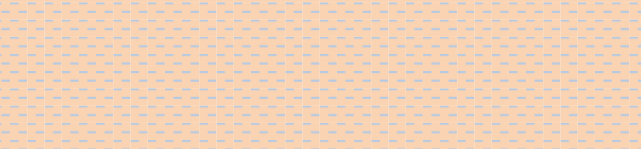
Most importantly, the mentors listen to both parents and educators, and use their unique knowledge of both worlds to overcome obstacles in communication. The DSESS Family Engagement Specialist coordinates the Partnership statewide by leading trainings, communication and statewide collaboration efforts with other agencies, provides guidance of the active Parent Mentor Leadership Council and collects contact and IDEA Performance Goals initiatives data. The Parent Mentor Partnership Council offers support throughout the year and leads efforts in planning and training. The Council’s regional representative is responsible for working on a consistent basis with new Parent Mentors and for coordinating submission of Annual Plans and Report

**Keeping In Harmony with Your Schools, Families and Community**

**For Better Student Results**

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**Unit 1:** “**Just Call Out My Name”**

Questions. Questions. Questions

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**Names** t**o Know:**

**Dr. John D. Barge**

State Superintendent of Schools

**Debbie Gay**

Director, Division for Special Education Services and Supports

**Julie Causey**

Project Manager for State Level Projects (Staff support for Parent Mentor Partnership) **Jane Grillo**

Parent Mentor, White County School District &

GaPMP Communications Coach

**Allison Stevenson**

Parent Mentor, Fayette County School District

GaPMP Leadership Council Chair

**GaPMP Leadership Council Advisors**

**Joan Baird**

Special Education Director, Madison County

**Ann Cross**

Special Education Director, Gordon County

**Gordina Porter**

Special Education Director, Mitchell County Schools

**Names** t**o Check On:**

GaDOE District Liaison (meets regularly with district special education directors) GaPMP Regional Representative (your Parent Mentor regional contact for submitting plans, reports, etc.)

Title **I** Parent **Involveme**nt **Unit** – Michelle Sandrock, Program Manager and

Nathan Schuman, Parent Involvement Specialist

**Getting Started--First Steps:**

To get started as a rookie Parent Mentor, please:

a) **Send all your contact information** (name, title, email address, mailing address, office phone number) and the contact information for your local director/supervising administrator, as well as any other administrator in the district who wants to be informed of GaPMP happenings to **aladd@doe.k12.ga.us.**

 **Every school district is listed on the parent mentor web site.**

**A photo of you will be taken at the Kickoff conference.** Jane Grillo, web editor, [jgrillo@white.k12.ga.us](mailto:jgrillo@white.k12.ga.us%20%20) for the Parent Mentor website will upload the photos.

 **Also, please send your personal telephone number to Anne Ladd**. We have a personal mentor contact list that is for GaPMP members only. (Providing a cell phone number is optional but just

Most mentors provide a cell phone number so they can contact each other at times when they’re out of the office)

 **Link** [www.parentmentor.org](http://www.parentmentor.org/)**, the official web site, to your school district’s special education page.**

 **Work with the district to promote the parent mentor on the districts’ special education page, along with contact information and office hours.**

b) **Locate office space, set up the office, telephone, computer, email etc.**

c) **Read the school district’s** Policies & Procedures Manual. Discuss the local district’s policies and procedures for: attendance, work hours, personnel actions, phone and email use, dress codes, internet use, travel approval, reporting suspected child abuse, and expense reporting. Some of it may apply only to full time employees, but the information will still be useful. You now represent your school district and professional conduct is expected.

**Discuss professional protocols with your Special Education Director**. For example: who needs to approve letters, brochures or other materials before they are distributed, who approves travel requests and how do you report expenses, how is time documented and schedule changes managed, and the like.

d) **Attend required trainings and meetings:**

• To get off to a good start, you need to attend Rookie Mentor Orientation training on August 20-21, 2014 at Lake Blackshear Inn and Resort.

• Critical Training Sessions-Don’t Miss Them:

 **Orientation**

 **Annual GaPMP Kick-Off Conference: September 10-12, 2014 at**

**The Classic Center, Athens.**

 **Drive-In University Trainings -** typically scheduled in February.

 **Four Regional Meetings** - scheduled throughout the school year.

**Administrators have an open invitation to attend all mentor trainings and meetings. Directors are encouraged to attend the Orientation session or send another administrator with the mentor. Directors are strongly encouraged to attend the Annual GaPMP Kick-Off Conference in September**. The more you know about what is expected and about mentors’ successes and challenges, the better you can support your mentor and the more your district will benefit from having a mentor.

e) **Join the GaPMP listserve,** our primary means of communication between the mentors. Send an email [aladd@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:aladd@doe.k12.ga.us ) and ask that you be added to our listserve, [parentmentors\_georgia@yahoogroups.com](mailto:parentmentors_georgia@yahoogroups.com).

Once you have been added, send out an email to the list serve introducing yourself. Directors/Administrators are welcome to join the list serve, but most

opt not to because of time restraints. The listserve is a professional communication tool. Parent to Parent of Georgia (GaP2P) leadership are also on our listserve to share information. We work very hard to collaborate with GaP2P,

our state’s Parent Information Training Center (PTI), funded by the US Department of Education under IDEA.

**f) AGaPMP Name Tag** will be ordered for you.

**g) Business cards** with your name, title, and contact information are typically provided by your district. Check with your director about the process for ordering your cards.

**h) Arrange Phone Message Privacy:** Experience has taught the GaPMP that parents should be able to leave a private message for the Parent Mentor. It is essential that a parent does not have to leave a name for a return call with a district or school secretary. We want to practice confidentiality at all times. This means arranging access to voice mail or setting up an answering machine so private messages can be left for the mentor.

**j) More “to dos…..”**

• **Discuss procedures for staff to review students’ IEPs**. Some districts will require the parent to fax permission. Other districts allow Parent Mentors to review relevant files, the IEPs of students/families with whom you are working, but you will have to record your access to the

file. Usually this is done by signing a log sheet at the front or back of the student’s file folder. You do not have access to all IEPs in the district,

only those of students with whom you are working.

• **Schedule regular meetings with your administrator** so you have opportunities to communicate with each other on a regular basis. It works best to schedule them in the fall for the rest of the school year. At least three meetings a year are the minimum, but some directors may want to meet more often.

• **Arrange childcare or respite care for your children for travel dates**. Directors, please encourage your mentor to reach out to other mentors to navigate the respite or other childcare options. Mentors, please reach out for help in finding care you can trust. Attending the Annual Kick-Off Conference won’t be a time of stress over leaving your child with a disability if trustworthy respite or childcare is planned in advance.

• **Go online to the GaPMP Learning Curve**, a password protected website, and **sign in on the front page at** www.parentmentors**.** org.

To sign in, type **“partnership”** and then **“mentor”**. You will find a vast array of materials to use in your local programs, but always follow the proper channels in your district for distribution of materials.

**Unit 2: “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough”** Helpful Hints, Including Confidentiality Leadership Opportunities

**Helpful Hints:**

• **Find your own “mentor” within your department,** someone who can introduce you to key people in the district. If possible, work with the director and this local mentor to make a plan for introductions.

• **Focus on building the important relationships and partnerships**, beginning with everyone in your department and moving out into the schools, the district, and the community. Introduce yourself to others in your district who work on Parent engagement such as **Title I Parent Liaisons.**  If your district has been part of the GraduateFIRST project in collaboration with GaDOE through the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), you’ll also want to meet and get to know the **Collaboration Coach** who works out of your regional GLRS Center (Georgia Learning Resources System).

• **Confidentiality safeguards** are important to remember. As an employee, you may not talk about any students with disabilities with anyone unless that person also works with that student. This includes others within the school district, family or friends. It’s easy to get excited about your work and accidently share confidential information. Be careful!!

• **Understanding your role** is critical. As a professional and a school district employee, you must also stay within the boundaries of your job. You can give advice and suggestions as a parent to other parents, but you are not a counselor, social worker, teacher, lawyer, or psychologist. You have an important role as a parent who mentors other parents and shares resources, but it is important to honor the boundaries and not stray into another’s role.

• **Reporting possible or suspected child abuse:** Find out what your school district’s procedures are for reporting suspected child abuse.

• **Respect co-workers** by ensuring that you:

 Are prepared for meetings with talking points and questions

 Arrive on time for meetings and be sure your meetings begin and end on time

Ensure all parties have the opportunity to actively participate in discussions

 Turn off your cell phone in the buildings

 Wear district name tag/carry business cards with you

 Dress appropriately

 Communicate in an open and responsive manner

 Respect different perspectives and learn from them

 Honor each other’s expertise and experience

 Safeguard confidentiality

 Manage time well; limit interruptions

 Maintain accountability at the local and state level

 Tap into to the knowledge and expertise of your colleagues on various programs, disabilities, education rules etc. is much more powerful. Spend time listening, observing and asking questions.

**Leadership Opportunities**

Listed below are a number of statewide or regional activities/organizations that offer Parent Mentors an opportunity for leadership and collaboration. Work with your special education director to determine which of these would be useful in your district. Active participation and collaboration through organizations such as these can extend your influence beyond what it might be otherwise and open doors for future collaboration. Consider your district goals and priorities when selecting programs or activities so that you’re involved important areas, but not overbooked beyond what you can accomplish in a part-time position.

**Some of GaPMP’s Partners and Leadership Opportunities:**

Parent Mentor Leadership Council

District Stakeholder teams such as:

* CA.F.E. DIALOGUE Teams, GraduateFIRST
* Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement (ASPIRE) A Student-Led IEPs Initiative
* SPDG College and Career Readiness Transition Initiative
* SPDG Early Learning Autism Initiative

Parent Training Information Center (PTI) – Parent to Parent of GA(GaP2P)

Cultural Competency Team, Center for Leadership in Disabilities, CLD Local Positive Behavior Supports Initiatives led by DSESS

Special Education State Advisory Panel, GaDOE Georgia Council for Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) Unlock the Waiting Campaign, AADD

Family Connections local partnerships

DBHDD Regional Boards

Transition Interagency Councils/Regional Transition Council

Autism State Advisory, DSESS

PTA/PTO

Special Olympics

**Unit 3: “Circle of Life”**

Your Role as a Parent Mentor: Tool Belt Special Education Handbook GaDOE Website: Parents’ Rights, Performance Goals & Indicators State Performance Plan Goal # 8;

PTA Family Engagement Standards; Parent Survey; IEP Meeting Attendance

Note: As an engaged parent, you may already know some or all of the above. If not, it may seem overwhelming at first, though you will soon be a PRO. Reviewing these materials with an eye to Parent Mentor goals will assist you in your daily work. Keep in mind that all your activities as a Parent Mentor should be tied and embedded into YOUR District’s goals, to provide a partnership approach to student achievement.

**Special Education Family Handbook/Manual**

Most districts offer a special education manual to families as a valuable resource. This may be on the district website. You should print or obtain a hard copy and keep it for reference. It explains how the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the State Board of Education Rules for special education are followed in your school district. It provides the foundation for interactions between the school district and families, as their child is evaluated, eligibility for special education services is considered, the Individualized Education Program is developed, and the IEP is reviewed each year. It also outlines how to handle disagreements between parents and the school district. As a Rookie Parent Mentor, you should be very familiar with everything in this handbook/manual.

**GaDOE Website**

If your district does not have an existing handbook, then you may want to go to the GaDOE websiteto obtain generic information. (Go to [www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org/)

>Home on the upper left>Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment>Special

Education Services and Supports>Implementation Manual.)

• The Implementation Manual explains the state special education rules in parent friendly terms and also provides school districts guidance in

how to implement them. Most districts also provide a handbook for

teachers that could provide useful information on how teachers are expected to implement special education rules. The GaDOE website also includes a wealth of information about education in general and about special education, including eligibility, services, IEPs, assessment, Parents’ Rights, discipline, rules, resources, training etc.

• Make sure you know how to find the **Parents’ Rights** (on the Special

Education page, under Links on the right). Here you’ll find descriptions of

Parents’ Rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in seven different languages, as well as videos in English and Spanish explaining the rights. There is also a parent-friendly version created by

the State Advisory Panel. You can also find **Parent Fact Sheets** on either the GaPMP website or on the GaDOE special education page. It is

important that you understand the Parents’ Rights well.

• **Georgia Performance Goals and Indicators** are also available on the GaDOE web site. These are the state’s Goals for improving special education services and supports and the achievement of students with disabilities. They include Goals such as improving the graduation rate with a general education diploma, decreasing the dropout rate, improving statewide test scores, and increasing the number of graduates who are continuing their education or are employed. The state’s performance on these Goals is measured by Indicators that show whether or not each school district and the state as a whole have met the target for each Goal for the year or not. Each Goal has at least one Indicator; most have several. The Indicators are measures that “indicate” how well the state/district/school is doing at meeting the Goal.

**State Performance Goal, Indicator # 8 for Parent Engagement** “Indicator 8” as you will hear it called is: “Increase the percentage of parents of students with IEPs who report that the school facilitates parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for students with disabilities.” This is measured through a Parent Survey that will be described in more detail later in this Manual. A copy of all of the Goals and Indicators can be found in the Addenda.

**Consolidated Application/ Local Improvement Plan (CLIP)**

Your school district also has an annual plan called the Consolidated Application that includes a special education plan for meeting these statewide Performance Goals and Indicators. You’ll want to review it also. Most, if not all, of your activities should relate directly to helping the school district meet the parent involvement Goal and at least one of the other statewide Goals. A key part of the role of the Parent Mentor is to assist the school district in engaging parents in their student’s education, providing information and resources that will enable them to make informed decision

**The PTA Family Engagement Standards**

The PTA Standards are a list the six types of involvement for successful partnerships with families. There are standards for welcoming, communicating,

supporting all students speaking up for each child, sharing power, and

collaborating with the community; they should be the bedrock upon which you build all of your family engagement initiatives and activities. A copy is in the Addenda for your convenience.

**The Parent Survey**

The Georgia Department of Education distributes a Parent Survey annually to the parents at randomly selected schools in order to raise success rates for students with disabilities. The GaDOE asks parents to answer questions to help assist

with helping local schools find ways to better partner with families. The results are posted with school district data on the GaDOE website, in the Summary Tab

of the Special Education Report. All Parent Mentors are asked to assist with the distributing the surveys and facilitating the return of as many surveys as

possible. Large districts will distribute surveys to some schools each year. Medium and small districts will have surveys done some years with no surveys during other years. The schools are randomly selected to achieve a fair representation of Georgia parents so it is important that the surveys get to the schools that are indicated each year.

**IEP Attendance Data**

All school districts maintain records each year on the percentage of parents of students with disabilities who attend their child’s IEP meeting. As a Parent

Mentor, you can help ensure parents attend the meetings by providing

information and training on the parents’ role in the IEP meeting and how to prepare to contribute at the IEP meeting. The district will report data each year on the percentage of parents of students with disabilities who attend the IEP meeting

**Unit 4:** “**Hello i**t**’s Me”**

Tips for Introducing Yourself and Your Role

The following strategies can help you inform the school district and community about your role as the new Parent Mentor:

• Introductions at Central Office Staff meetings and Coordinator, Lead Teacher meetings.

• Find opportunities to tell your individual story to central office staff so colleagues can understand the challenges a parent faces and feels raising a child with a disability.

• Your local special education director can send a letter of introduction to school administrators, counselors, teachers, therapists, psychologists, school district partners, etc., describing your role and providing your contact information.

• Create or customize an existing Parent Mentor Brochure with your information.

With your Director’s approval, get a sufficient quantity printed for distribution. (Check the Parent Mentor “Learning Curve” online for samples of existing introductory brochures).

• Meet with principals, counselors, and social workers in each school. Plan visits based on your district’s goals and priorities. Attend family and community

meetings and listen. Make sure you introduce yourself at the meetings.

• Meet with individual school PTA/PTOs. Determine if ALL parents are being included and how you can help. Contact the partners on your community map. Call the GAP2P representative for your area and introduce yourself.

• Build relationships and partnerships with leaders to work towards including ALL parents in their activities – especially Title I and English Language Learners programs.

• Provide information about the Parent Mentor program to local newspapers, with prior approval from your Director and district Media Coordinator/Public Relations Director. Learn the approval protocol for any flyer, news item etc. and never distribute any information without first obtaining approval according to the local

policy. Also find out what to do if a member of the media contacts you directly. Often you will need to refer the call to the Media Coordinator/Public Relations Director before responding to any requests for information or interviews.

• Disseminate your contact information on school web sites, PTA/PTO newsletters, again with prior approval as required by your school district.

 Mail an introduction letter to every family with a student who has an IEP

and/or send a letter to every teacher. By now you know you need prior approval to send the introductory letter.

 Decide with your director what services you are able to provide the first six months. Don’t promise services you are not yet ready to provide.

 Distribute your contact information to intake staff, social workers, psychologists, counselors and diagnosticians to be given to parents at the time of referral or evaluation.

**Unit 5: “We Are the World”**

Partnerships inside the School District;

With Other Agencies; within the Community; And the Parent Leadership Coalition Agencies

You’re strongly encouraged, as a new Parent Mentor, to get an overview of the special education services and supports as well as other student support possibilities such as

the Title I, and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs. You will need this information on an ongoing basis.

**Partnerships Inside the School District**

 After School Tutoring programs

 Career -Technical and Agriculture Education (CTAE)

 Communities In Schools – connecting community resources with schools

 English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program

 High school Graduation Coaches (limited)

 Media Specialists

 PTA/PTO

 Parent - Teacher Resource Centers (Often funded by Title I)

 School Improvement

 Title I Parent Involvement Program

Title I Parent Involvement Unit offers excellent resources to Parent Mentors and also extends invitations to its regional meetings.

**Partnerships with Other Agencies within the Community**

Parent to Parent of Georgia (GaP2P) – Georgia’s federally funded Parent Information

and Training Center. This is a key partner and a great source of information for parents. Please spend some time on their excellent website to familiarize yourself with GaP2P

and the services and resources available. Most important to begin is to travel on their

**Road Map to Services and Supports**.

**Parent Leadership Coalition Agencies: Sharing information and resources to create better outcomes for children**

• Bright from the Start - Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Childcare

Inclusion and Pre-K Coordinators

• Children with Special Needs, Babies Can't Wait, Project SCEIs, Parent Educators, Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Supports and Title I Parent Outreach

• Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)

• Parent to Parent of Georgia

• Georgia Department or Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)

• Georgia Family Connection Partnership

• Institute on Human Development and Disability (IHDD)

• Leadership Institute on Developmental Disabilities, Georgia State University

• State PTA

• State Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC)

**Unit 6: “Defying Gravity”**

Using the Learning Curve/Other Internet Resources

The Learning Curve: An Introduction

General Disability Information Links

**The Learning Curve: An Introduction**

The Learning Curve is the Parent Mentor Partnership’s online resource. It contains updated resources, mentor directories, current initiatives, calendars and scheduled events, and as well as Parent Mentor tips and featured stories. It houses a wide variety of resources including downloadable materials created by mentors that you can customize for use in your own district: Power Point Presentations, Brochures, Flyers, Newsletters and a variety of other handouts and resources.

**Other Internet Resources GEORGIA Links:** [**www.parentmentors.org**](http://www.parentmentors.org/)

The official site of the Parent Mentor Partnership of Georgia, providing families, educators and community members information on team building, communication strategies, family support, personal stories from parents and educators, links to resources and best practices in family engagement, as well as initiatives at the state, regional and local school level.

[**www.cobbparentmentors.eboard.com**](http://www.cobbparentmentors.eboard.com/)

A bulletin board format used by Parent Mentors in the Cobb County School District to quickly get out information to families and educators on upcoming events and topics. The site also archives past information for easy referral.

[**http://www.gadoe.org**](http://www.gadoe.org/)

The official site of the Georgia Department of Education with links on the Special Education Section to a **Transition Manual** to assist families and students to understand adult learning, working and living options. In addition, there is a link to the IDEA Implementation Manual created by 60 educators and 10 parents in a chapter format explaining the State Rules on Special Education in parent friendly terms.

Make sure you check on the Parent Section! In addition, go to Parent Involvement under Title I for the Parent Friendly Schools model and many other resources.

[**GeorgiaStandards.Org**](https://www.georgiastandards.org/Pages/Default.aspx)

Provides information on the Georgia Performance Standards and the Common Core Standards that outline what students are expected to know and to do in each subject area at each grade level. There is a section specifically for parents as well as sections for educators providing lesson plans and other resources, along with links to other education sites.

[**http://www.p2pga.org**](http://www.p2pga.org/)

The site of the state’s Parent Training Information Center and a vast resource database on supports and services including information about Navigation Teams at the local level. There is an extensive database and trained parents answer the phone 40 hours a week.

[**www.partnershipsforsuccess.com**](http://www.partnershipsforsuccess.com/index.php)

An initiative of the Georgia Council for Developmental Disabilities that provides students with disabilities opportunities to participate with their non-disabled peers in areas of recreation, social activities, sports, and community service. It also offers a self-determination curriculum and training on Student-Led IEPs

[**www.georgiapta.org**](http://www.georgiapta.org/)

Georgia PTA site that partners at the state level as well as in local communities with the

GaDOE and Parent Mentors in family engagement initiative

[**http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/service/p/project-search/default/**](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/service/p/project-search/default/)

The Project Search High School Transition model which is being used in many districts in Georgia is the collaboration effort a school district, Vocational Rehabilitation, a business, and a supported employment agency.

**National Family Engagement Research Links:**

**www.sedl.org**

The National Center for Family and School Connections with Schools provides toolkits, webinars, a literature database, a research synthesis, and briefs/handouts on family and community connections.

[**http://www.partnershipschools.org**](http://www.partnershipschools.org/)

The National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University provides a variety of resources including NNPS Samplers with ideas for researched family

engagement in areas such as reading, math, and science, as well as ideas across grade levels.

[**http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/fine-family-involvement-network- of-educators**](http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/fine-family-involvement-network-of-educators)

A Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) is a community of thousands of

educators, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers dedicated to strengthening family–school–community partnerships. There is no cost to become a FINE member.

**National Resources** [**http://www.eric.ed.gov**](http://www.eric.ed.gov/)

The Education Resources Information Center, including sections geared to families.

[**www.ideapartnership.org**](http://www.ideapartnership.org/)

Site of the DIALOGUE problem solving method used in Georgia’s C.A.F.E. DIALOGUEs on dropout prevention and early childhood issues and links to National Communities of Practices on many key education issues facing families are included.

[**www.fape.org**](http://www.fape.org/) The Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE) links families, advocates, and self-advocates to information about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

[**www.ndpc-sd.org**](http://www.ndpc-sd.org/)

The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) assists in building states’ capacity to increase school completion rates for students with

disabilities and is a partner in Georgia’s GraduateFIRST project through the State

Personnel Development Grant.

[**www.nichcy.org/**](http://www.nichcy.org/)

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHY) is a national information and referral organization and its site contains many valuable publications, as well as a database to enable the searcher to find national organizations that provide information to families of children with disabilities. The [State Resource Sheets](http://www.nichcy.org/states.htm), which lists the governmental and non-profit organizations that provide services to families of children with disabilities.

**Unit 7: “We are Family”**

The Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership (GaPMP)

**Regional and Statewide Meetings**

Parent Mentors focus on local family engagement initiatives, but the Partnership is funded in part through the Georgia Department of Education’s Division for Special Education Services and Supports. The Parent Mentors’ activities are expected to support the school district’s efforts to improve the achievement of students with disabilities and to engage families in their child’s education. Regional and statewide meetings provide information on best practices for improving family engagement, planning and implementing successful projects, assessing results and collecting outcome data, The meetings also provide an opportunity for collaboration and problem solving as mentors share successes and work to overcome barriers.

Early each fall, a Leadership Conference is held for the Regional Representatives and Leadership Council to participate in leadership training and explore best practices for family engagement. Each September, the big event is the GaPMP Kickoff Conference for all Parent Mentors and the special education administrators from their districts. Many GaDOE special education staff attend so this is a good opportunity to meet them. Regional meetings are also held four times a year in each of the six regions, allowing more in-depth discussion of local issues and more collaboration time.

**The GaPMP Directory**

The Directory is a listing, by GaPMP Region, of Parent Mentors, with their local school district and their GaDOE district. Check the Directory to find out what GLRS/GaDOE district you’re in, as the six GaPMP regions and the17 GLRS/GaDOE districts are not an exact match.

**The Parent Mentor’s Professional Role: Representing Your District**

• As a Parent Mentor, you are a representative of the school district so act accordingly. Professional behavior and communication are expected, as with all school district employees. The district’s policies and procedures for attendance, holidays, travel approval, expense reports, confidentiality, and professional conduct apply to all employees, including the Parent Mentor.

• You should obtain permission from your Director, or supervising administrator, to attend required conferences and training sessions. Please apply for approval/permission well in advance as some districts have a long approval process. Registration costs and hotel expenses for approved overnight stays are usually paid by each school district. Contact your Regional Council Representative or trainer for specific questions.

**Parent Mentor Partnership Leadership Council:**

Leadership opportunities abound within the Parent Mentor Partnership. The Leadership

Council consists of an Executive Board and Regional Council Representatives. The

Council meets separately twice a year for specific training and to provide direction and guidance for the Parent Mentor Partnership. The GaPMP Directory lists all members of the Partnership, the Council, Executive Board, and Regional Representatives. Be sure to check it out.

Please feel free to contact YOUR Regional Council Representatives with any questions or comments. The Representatives also coordinate submission of required plans, reports, and contact data to the state staff. The name of your Regional Representative will be

provided at Orientation.

**Unit 8: “Working 9 to 5”**

Statewide Expectations: The Family Engagement Initiative

There are several statewide expectations for all Parent Mentors. Because the GaPMP is partially funded through GaDOE, the Partnership is accountable for meeting these statewide expectations. Mentors also participate in a variety of other activities and collaborative efforts in their districts and communities, but they have common statewide requirements, including planning, implementing, and reporting the results of a Family Engagement Initiative, attending state and regional meetings, and maintaining and reporting data on the number of parent contacts made each month.

**Overview:**

You’re expected plan and carry out a Family Engagement Initiative each school year that provides parents with knowledge and skills to do at least one of the following Vital

B ehaviors. These are behaviors that research has shown make a difference in student

achievement if parents do them routinely.

• Routinely help their high school student plan for college or further education after high school and for a career**.**

• Routinely help their preschool, elementary, or middle school child learn at home using materials provided by the school to target one area of need.

Each school district and each Parent Mentor are accountable for submitting an Annual Accountability form that includes:

1. An **Annual Plan section** describing the Parent Engagement Project. The plans are revised as needed throughout the school year and updated or redone annually.

2. An **Annual Report section** that summarizes the results data collected as the plan is implemented and at the end of the year.

The Parent Mentor Partnership uses the Family Engagement Project data as one way to measure the impact of the Parent Mentors in their districts and in the State.

**Unit 9: “You Don’t Love me Anymore”**

Ensure you are maintaining Confidentiality and using good

Steps to Dealing with Parent Concerns

**General Hints**

 Listening and communication skills.

 Collect all available background information

 The student's file may be reviewed, with prior parent permission or as per

School District protocol, if you are working with the family/student. You do not have access to all IEPs, only those of students/families with whom you are directly working.

 If required, with guidance from the Director or supervisor, you can act as a

liaison to assist in resolving the concern or dispute.

 Ensure that the parent/guardian has a copy of the GaDOE Dispute Resolution Sheet. This can be found on the GaDOE website and in many counties is included in the Parent Welcome Packet when a child enters into the Program for Exceptional Children.

NOTE: Discuss these steps with your Director/supervisor before proceeding. There is specific updated information available on the DOE website, regarding dispute resolution. Please check this out. You can also direct the parent to information on the site.

**Informal Resolution/Local**

1.) Suggest that the parent talk with the child’s teacher(s). If necessary, request an IEP team meeting to discuss concerns. At the meeting, focus on the issue at hand. Keep the discussion ALL about the student and his or her educational needs. Remember that everyone is on the same team, working to ensure an appropriate education for the student.

2.) If the concern is still unresolved, discuss it with lead special education teacher

3.) If the concern remains unresolved, discuss it with the principal

4.) If it is still unresolved, discuss the concern with the special education director or his/her designee.

5.) Finally, if the concern hasn’t been resolved yet, discuss it with the

Superintendent.

Remember that professional protocols may exist in the district for making appointments ahead of time to see the teacher, lead teacher, principal, director, or superintendent. Find out what these are and be sure to keep your immediate supervisor informed at each step along the way, especially if contacting the principal or superintendent.

**Formal Resolution/GaDOE**

If the issues are still unresolved after every effort to correct the problem locally, parents may elect to use the formal IDEA dispute resolution options. It is always recommended

to first try to resolve the problem with the teacher, school or school district, so encourage parents to try to resolve the issues locally before turning to these formal

options.

**The three formal dispute resolution options are:**

• Filing a Formal Complaint

• Requesting Mediation

• Requesting a Due Process Hearing

The procedure to follow for each of these options can be found on the GaDOE website. Go to [http://www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/). Click on Home on the upper left > Curriculum and Assessment > Special Education Services and Supports. Scroll down to Dispute Resolution and click on the desired option. The parent should follow the directions as indicated for the option they wish to pursue.

Be sure to notify your immediate supervisor and the special education director if a parent intends to file a complaint or request mediation or a due process hearing. It is important to follow up with the parent/district to check on the outcome. It may help to direct parents to agencies and proactive support groups and resources to support their

ongoing needs.

**Don’**t **forge**tt**he paren**t**-**fr**iendly** explanationforms **on majo**r **special** education **issues and** regulations **on** t**he GaDOE** website**.**

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**Addendum**: **Taking Care of Business**

PTA STANDARDS/TERMS

PTA Standards/ Sample Plan Form and Example of Plan/Terms

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement

Note: Also PTA Standards and used in the School Keys Strand on Family Engagement:

**PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships**

Stan dard 1 : W elcom in g all families in to th e school com m un ity—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class. When parents volunteer, both families and schools reap benefits that come in few other ways. Literally millions of dollars worth of volunteer services are performed by parents and family members each year in the public schools. Studies have concluded that volunteers express greater confidence in the schools where they have opportunities to participate regularly. In addition, assisting in school or program events/activities communicates to a child, "I care about what you do here". In order for parents to feel appreciated and welcome, volunteer work must be meaningful and valuable to them. Capitalizing on the expertise and skills of parents and family members provides much needed support to educators and administrators already taxed in their attempts to meet academic goals and student needs. Although there are many parents for whom volunteering during school hours is not possible, creative solutions like before- or after-school "drop-in" programs or "at home" support activities provide opportunities for parents to offer their assistance as well.

Stan dard 2 : Com m u n icatin g effectiv ely—Families and school staff engage in regular, two- way, meaningful communication about student learning. Communication is the foundation of a solid partnership. When parents and educators communicate effectively, positive relationships develop, problems are more easily solved, and students make greater progress. Too often school or program communication is one-way without the chance to exchange ideas and share perceptions. Effective home-school communication is the two-way sharing of information vital to student success. Even parent-teacher conferences can be one-way if the goal is merely reporting student progress. Partnering requires give-and-take conversation, goal setting for the future, and regular follow-up interactions.

Stan dard 3 : Supporting student success—Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively. Student learning increases when parents are invited into the process by helping at home. Enlisting parent’s involvement provides educators and administrators with a valuable support district, creating a team that is working for each child’s success. The majority of parents are willing to assist their students in learning, but many times are not sure what assistance is most helpful and appropriate. Helping parents connect to their children’s learning enables parents to communicate in powerful ways that they value what their children achieve. Whether it’s working together on a computer, displaying student work at home, or responding to a particular class assignment, parent’s actions communicate to their children that education is important.

Stan dard 4 : Speak in g up for ev ery ch ild—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success. Studies have shown that schools where parents are involved in decision making and advocacy have higher levels of student achievement and greater public support. Effective partnerships develop when each partner is respected and empowered to fully participate in the decision-making process. Schools and programs that actively enlist parent participation and input communicate that parents are valued as full partners in the education of their children. Parents and educators depend on shared authority in decision-making districts to foster parental trust, public confidence, and mutual support of each other’s efforts in helping students succeed. The involvement of parents, as individuals or as representative of others, is crucial in collaborative decision-making processes on issues from curriculum and course selection, to discipline policies and over-all school reform measures.

Standard 5 : Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs. Parents are a child’s life support district. Consequently, the most important support a child can receive comes from the home. School personnel and program staff support positive parenting by respecting and affirming the strengths and skills needed by parents to fulfill their role. From making sure that students arrive at school rested, fed, and ready to learn, to setting high learning expectations and nurturing self-esteem, parents sustain their children’s learning. When staff members recognize parent roles and responsibilities, ask parents what supports they need, and work to find ways to meet those needs, they communicate a clear message to parents: We value you and need your input in order to maintain a high-quality program.

Standard 6 : Collaborating with community —Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation. As part of the larger community, schools and other programs fulfill important community goals. In like fashion, communities offer a wide array of resources valuable to schools and the families they serve. When schools and communities work together, both are strengthened in synergistic ways and make gains that outpace what either entity could accomplish on its own: families access community resources more easily; businesses connect education programs with the realities of the workplace; seniors contribute wisdom and gain a greater sense of purpose; and ultimately and students serve and learn beyond their school involvement.

**What Do All These Terms Mean?**

What is a P erform an ce Goal?It is a target that sets expectations for performance. Research indicates that setting challenging; attainable goals leads to high performance.Performance Goals set challenging and attainable expectations for the state and its school districts:

**What is an** I n dicator**?**

As you know, there are 16 indicators under the IDEA State Performance Goals. Indicators “indicate” the level that will be considered successful performance. If that level is achieved, the goal is met. If it is not achieved, the goal is not met.

An Indicator helps the school district know how far it has gone on reaching the goal. Each goal has two to four indicators that help it evaluate its progress.

**What is a** B est P ractice**?**

This is a way to do things that moves the performance closer to the target. Best

Practices are methods that other mentors have successfully used to meet or improve performance on the Goals. If you follow these same processes, you will have an easier time reaching the Goal. Best Practices should be the most efficient and effective way of accomplishing the Goal to date.

**We are Ongoing Activities?**

These are the actual events designed to ultimately reach the indicator and eventually the goal. The activities can have short term measurements leading to the long term goal. Strategies help

**What is a SMART Goal?**

A SMART Goal describes what Parent Mentor will achieve by the end of the year. It indicates what level of performance will be considered successful on the Annual Indicator.

**SPECIFIC:** What is the target group? Who will do what? When? Where? How? Why? **MEASURABLE:** How much? How many? How well? How will I know I met the goal? **ATTAINABLE:** What steps are needed to reach the goal?

**REALISTIC:** High expectations, but reachable in one school year.

**RESULTS:** What can get done this year? Do my activities lead meeting the goal.

**TIMELY:** When will the goal be reached?

**What are Vital Behaviors?**

Vital behaviors are the behaviors or actions that lead to the results you want. They are the few high-leverage actions that, if parents routinely do them, produce the outcomes

you’re after. Vital Behaviors are key to change efforts. Change efforts often fail because they either focus on the results but don’t identify the specific behavior to get there, or they spend time and energy to many actions, rather than focusing on the vital

few. Another frequent problem is working hard to help parents gain new knowledge, but not giving them practice in using the new knowledge or coaching and assistance in

how to do it. The term vital behavior comes from a book called Influencer: The Power to Change Anything by Kerry Patterson, Jospeh Grennu, David Maxfiled, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, published in 2008 by McGraw Hill. It’s a book well worth your time to

read.

For the GaPMP there are two core, or general Vital Behaviors. All Mentors must work on one of them, depending on the grade level of the targeted students in the Initiative. These are behaviors that research has shown make a difference in student achievement if parents do them routinely.

• Routinely help their high school student plan for college or further education after high school and for a career**.**

• Routinely help their preschool, elementary, or middle school child learn at home using materials provided by the school to target one area of need.

Then the Mentor describes specific vital behaviors to show what parents in the Initiative will do. These describe how the parent will help the student plan for college or how the parent will help the child learn at home. These vital behaviors are then used to create benchmarks that indicate the percentage of parents who actually to the vital behaviors that will be considered to be successful. The Parent Mentor uses the benchmark checks to decide if the plan is working. If the benchmarks are being met, everything is on track to meet the Goal by the end of the year. If the benchmarks are not met, the Mentor needs to make changes in the plan to get back on track.

**What is a Benchmark?**

A benchmark is a checkpoint and method for collecting data on the parents’ progress in routinely doing the vital behaviors they have been taught. A benchmark becomes a standard for comparison and an indicator of success or the need for change if the results don’t meet expected levels of performance. You use two types of benchmarks in the data collection process: deadline benchmarks and data benchmarks. Deadline benchmarks are simply dates you set for completing the activities that need to be done to implement your initiative. They can be included in the Annual Plan if you find them useful. They are not required.

Data benchmarks are created by adding a checkup date and success criteria to each vital behavior. Data benchmarks are now required. Data benchmarks should be checked at least three times over the school year to find out if parents are actually doing the vital behaviors that will get the results you want for your initiative. If you find that the success criteria have been met, you know you’re on the right track to get the results you want.

If you find that the success criteria haven’t been met, you know that you need to make changes. Examples might include providing more practice for parents, more training, or demonstrating the vital behaviors again in order to achieve the desired results.

**Extra Credit Reading: How Did We Get Here?**

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the US Department of Education measures the success of the Georgia Department of Education’s work in assisting students with disabilities by looking annually at whether or not the state overall and each individual school district has met the targets for each Performance Goal and its related Indicators as established in the **S**t**ate Performance Plan. (SPP)**

The **Annual Progress Report (APR)** is Georgia’s annual update on the SPP to OSEP. In the APR, GaDOE reports: the new annual data; updates the targets if needed; and describes new or revised statewide initiatives, based on the state’s success or challenges in meeting the established targets. In some cases the activities in the SPP will be updated. The SPP and APR are available online at the GaDOE website.

Each district looks at its data for each of the IDEA Performance Goals - with the Indicators that follow underneath each goal – and describes how the district will work toward meeting the targets in its **Comprehensive Local Improvement Plan. (CLIP**) which is a part of the **Consolidated Application** that each school district writes annually. The CLIP is sent to the GaDOE each summer for review. The Parent Mentor is listed on the CLIP as a partner working toward meeting the targeted IDEA Performance Goal(s).



**LEARN. LINK. LISTEN**

The Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership Division for Special Education Georgia Department of Education