



www.parentmentors.org

November 2011

Upcoming Events

Nov. 3

Spectrum, Gwinnett County Autism Support Group Meeting
1st Baptist Church of Duluth
2908 Duluth Hwy 120
Duluth, GA 30096
6:30 PM

Nov 12

College Fair for Students with Disabilities
GCPS' Instructional Support Building 200
437 Old Peachtree Rd., NW
Suwanee, GA 30024
11:30 AM – 3:00 PM

Nov 15

Balanced Lunch Bunch
Strategies for Improving Your Child's Communication Skills
GCPS' Instructional Support Building 200
Grayson Room 2.111
11:30 AM – 12:45 PM

How to Get Assistive Technology Devices for Children at Little or No Cost to the Family

GCPS' Instructional Support Building 200
4 - 6 PM
RSVP
Debra_Mastin@gwinnett.k12.ga.us

Nov 17

National Parent Involvement Day

Nov 21-25

Thanksgiving Break – No School

Nov 28

Return to School

EXCEPTIONAL NEWS

Gwinnett County Public School System

For Parents of Students Receiving Special Education Services



Volume 1, Issue 1

Meet the Parent Mentors

Have you ever wished you could call your child's school and talk with someone who knows what it's like to raise a child with a disability? Someone who understands the day-to-day struggles? Do you need help in learning about the special education process or how you can be a better team member in your child's IEP meetings? Do you just need a shoulder to cry on? If so, you should call us, your Gwinnett County Public School System's parent mentors; Jackie McNair & Anne Ladd. We each have a child who receives special education services in the Gwinnett County Public School System (GCPS). We work to build a bridge between parents, administrators, teachers, and the communities, in an effort to create greater success and better outcomes for students with disabilities. As mentors, we are here to help you find solutions and to help you learn to collaborate with your child's school in ways that

will promote positive outcomes.

During the school year, we work in the Instructional Support Building, Special Education Department and offer monthly parent meetings (Balanced Lunch Bunch) and various informational sessions about topics that are important to students with disabilities and their families. When invited, we present in schools in the district and also collaborate with Title I Parent Instructional Support Coordinators, teaching parents their roles in helping their students plan for and achieve their educational and post-secondary goals. If you need information about community resources, support groups, disability information, waivers, or other information related to special education, please call or email us. We look forward to getting to know you and are here to support you in any way we can.



Jackie_McNair@gwinnett.k12.ga.us
(678) 301-7149



Anne_Ladd@gwinnett.k12.ga.us
(678) 301-7212

Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.
Robert Frost



First Edition of Newsletter

This newsletter is the first of a monthly effort to provide you with information about special education topics and to keep you informed. Upcoming issues will include information that supports children with disabilities and their families. If you have questions or comments, please email Jackie at Jackie_McNair@gwinnett.k12.ga.us

Exceptional News



Coming Soon!

**Parent
Involvement
Surveys**

If you receive a survey, please complete it and return it to the Georgia Department of Education.

**Parent
Engagement
Month**

News You Can Use

The Benefits of A Support Network

If you are the parent of a child with special needs, you may sometimes feel alone and isolated from others. Especially if your friends and family do not have a child like yours, you may feel like it's easier to keep to yourself.

Isolation can impact your mental health, contributing to feelings of stress, depression, and anxiety. Research shows that even 10 minutes a day of social interaction can improve cognitive functioning.

The benefits of a successful social support network are numerous and can contribute to your longevity and quality of life. This is especially true if you are raising a child with a disability.

Knowing that you are not alone and that someone understands and relates to some of your challenges can help reduce the stress and loneliness you may be experiencing.

A support group can help you make friends, get you out of your house and into your community. Some groups have childcare during meetings, making it convenient for you to attend. Some groups offer weekend activities and respite. A support meeting can be an informal talk or can include speakers presenting information on topics important to you. You will have the opportunity to learn about resources and gain knowledge from others, as well as share what you have learned. You will discover that you are not alone.

To find out if there is a support group in your area, please contact GCPS' parent mentors.

Jackie McNair, Parent Mentor

Questions? If you have a question you would like answered, please email it to Jackie_McNair@gwinnett.k12.ga.us. Each month, a question will be chosen and answered in Exceptional News.

November Is Parent Engagement Month

Evidence shows that when parents are actively involved in their child's education at home and at school, children have better school attendance, behave better, achieve better academically, and do better in and out of school. This is true, regardless of parents' income, education level, or cultural background. Showing an interest in what your child is learning sends a message that school is important.

Talk with your child's teacher or other school staff about how you can help at school. There may be opportunities for you to read to students, assist in classrooms, help with school events, work in the media center, volunteer with PTA, etc. If your child is in a self-contained special education environment, volunteering in different areas of the school is a good opportunity for you to get to know other parents, administrators, and teachers and connect with your community.

Even if you are not able to visit your child's school as often as you would like, you can encourage learning by helping your child stay organized, checking homework, limiting television and video games during the week, reading aloud to your child, and talking about what is going on at school. When your child enters middle or high school, your involvement is still critical. You can influence academic progress by encouragement, reinforcement, and modeling.

For more information on Parent Engagement Month, go to the Georgia Department of Education's website: www.doe.k12.ga.us.