



# Panther Press

A publication of the Georgia Academy for the Blind  
Friday, May 15th, 2020

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider*

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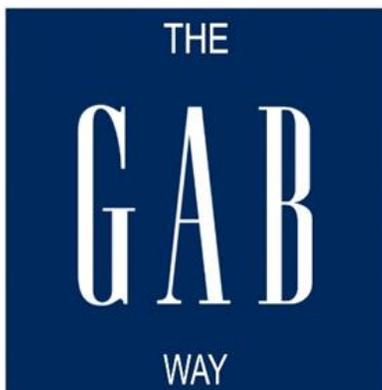


Georgia Academy for  
the Blind - GAB



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Mission Statement: The Georgia Academy for the Blind provides quality education services to Georgia's students with visual impairments and/or visual impairments in conjunction with other disabilities to prepare them to achieve their highest level of independence in transition to college and career readiness. *Check out this student produced video featuring this Mission Statement:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRrbhkGSe98>



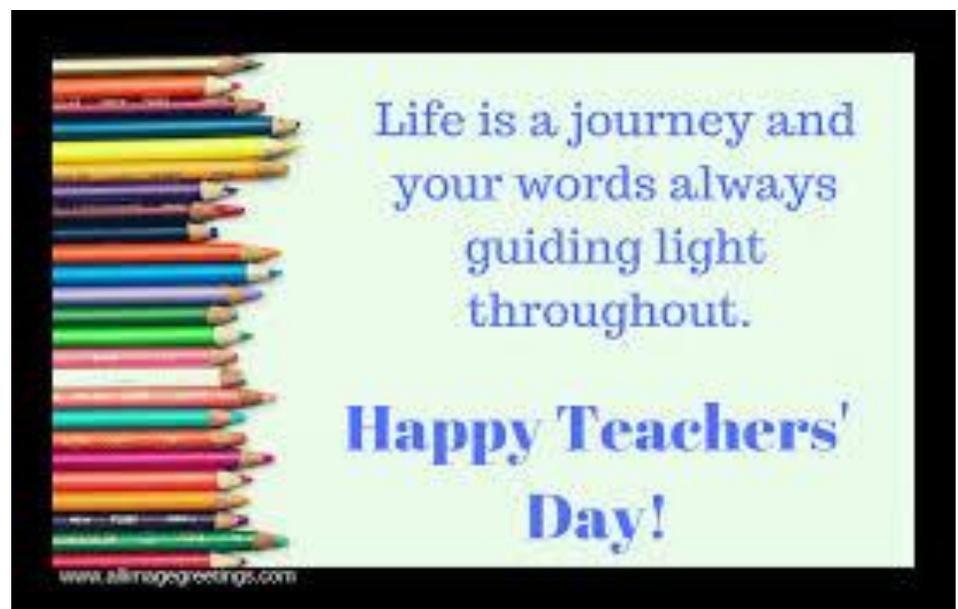
Give it your best  
Achieve your goals  
Be respectful

**MAY:**



**May 15th is the last day of distance learning.**

**The first Teacher's Day  
was celebrated on May 15th, 1918.**



This newsletter is published by our Parent Mentor/Family Engagement Specialist, Jennifer Minter. Please send your ideas, news and resources in your community to her. [JMinter@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:JMinter@doe.k12.ga.us), 478-262-3303. **Please remember to contact her if you've had a change in address, phone number and/or email!**

## A message from our Superintendent

Dear Families and Staff,

Welcome to the last day of school for year 2019-2020! Thank you for all you have done to assist the GAB Family to ride the waves of change successfully. Our “good customs” worked in time with routine and preparation but suffered somewhat of an abrupt blow in emergency. Truly the COVID pandemic has changed our ways of doing business.

We all have very fresh thoughts of Lessons Learned that we want to take under consideration ways to improve our services and, of course, be better prepared for emergencies in the future. Case managers will be reaching out to families in Supt Woods’ spirit of “Compassion Over Compliance” to serve the whole child, checking to see how you are doing and how we can help. Also, a State Schools survey will be developed to capture needs. For example, GAB teachers have stated that students/families should have preloaded iPads for remote communication and instruction. That is one item on our preparation list, and we want to grow the list with this survey.

Many of you have made your appointments to pack up for the year and settle into a semi-normal summer routine. Governor Kemp’s updated shelter-in-place guidelines support more flexibility as the economy enjoys a soft opening; however, the current requirements do not provide concrete answers to when public schools may open. That is one way to keep us all on the edge of our seats and tuned in! That said, GAB will not be hosting our highly acclaimed Summer Program, and we truly regret not having that opportunity. The tentative calendar showing a student start date of [Sunday, August 2, 2020](#), is included in this newsletter.

The GAB staff has been sharing what we do to stay strong and take care of ourselves. As we cope with change, we learn mindfulness to take joy from things that we may have taken for granted previously. Since adopting Payne Stewart [on January 29](#), I have been outside with him every day and I have realized how much I have missed. I have not truly been “home” daily for 43 years! What I saw this year, that I have never seen before, is the change of my thrown-out mums and scraggly gardenias from dead-looking debris to spring bloom – daily changes. All is not lost! What the GAB staff has missed most since March 13 is being with our children daily. It has been our joy to see the beautiful changes in our students over the days and years and to know that we are a part of the blossom that is each child – the whole child.

Cindy



“The old order  
changeth yielding  
place to new And  
God fulfills himself  
in many ways; Lest  
one good custom  
should corrupt the  
world.” Tennyson

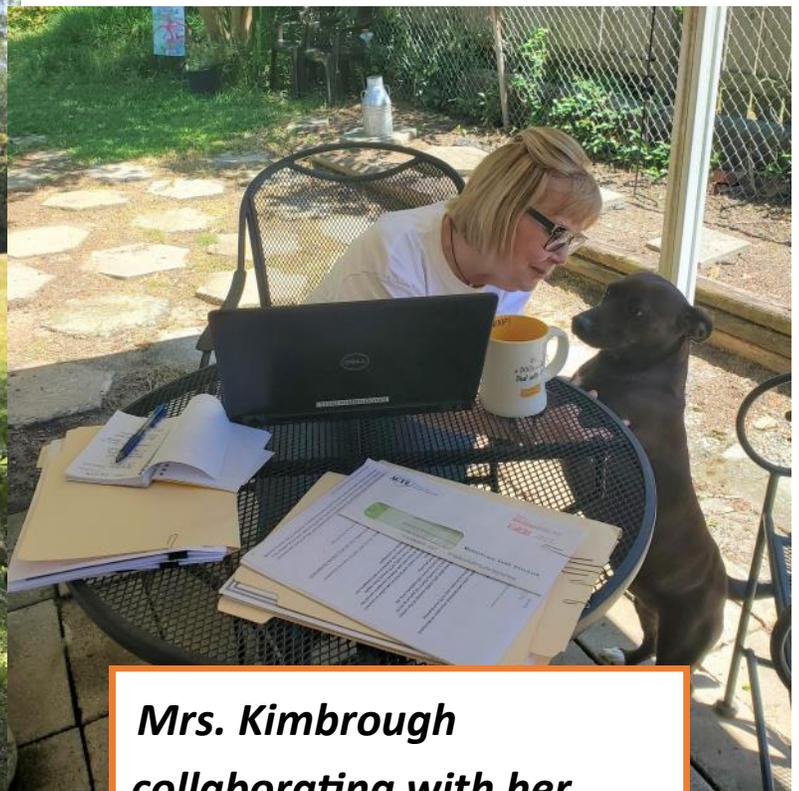
## GAB Teachers at Home:



**Mrs. Bardash with her Great niece, Addy, and her dog, Jake the doodle.**



**Mrs. Jones holding one of her chickens with her grandson, Christopher.**



**Mrs. Kimbrough collaborating with her teaching assistant, Macey.**

## GAB Teachers at Home:



Mr. Collins with his daughter Marley. Who knew GAB's "Teacher of the Year" could cook a mean spaghetti?



Mrs. Barfield getting to hold her baby at nap time.

Dr. Bennett's daughter, Sawyer Kate smiling at the computer.



Mrs. Barfield with her children and her Mom on Mother's Day!

Dr. Bennett's daughter, Paisley, waving from her Zoom class.



## He's got us Covered:

Mrs. Cathy Bain, a paraprofessional at GAB, had a friend who helped make blankets for Project Linus, which has made over 40,000 blankets for children in the U.S. Mrs. Bain asked Project Linus for 6 blankets for the library at GAB. However, when Merle Smith (pictured to the right), a volunteer blanket maker, heard about the Academy for the Blind, he wanted to know how many students were at the school. Mrs. Bain told him about 100, and since then he has made over 120 blankets for students at GAB. He is retired and says it just thrills him to do this for children. Since there isn't much on tv these days, he watches the weather channel and makes blankets. He is a dedicated Christian man that always has his Bible near by and says a prayer for each child who will receive the blanket he is making. Mrs. Bain says that it was an honor to meet such a man! Pictured below are some of the youngest students at GAB taking naps with their blankets made by Mr. Smith.



All students receive a blanket when they come to GAB, even the ones who arrive late in the year!



Clay is new to GAB and didn't start school until February 2020!



Madison (on the left) started GAB this year in the Fall and Jestine started in January as a new student at GAB.



William on the left and Ian on the right, with their blankets made by Mr. Merle Smith.

## May Birthdays

5-4 Jordan W.

5-4 Mary Beth

5-19 Tyzia

5-20 Heidi

5-20 William



"When this has passed  
may we say  
that love spread more quickly  
than any virus ever could,  
may we say this was  
not just an ending  
but also a place to begin."

~ CHRISTINE VALTERS PAINTNER