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Happy Holidays

A Message from the Department of Exceptional Education

As we prepare for the winter break, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our parents, students, and dedicated staff. The holiday season is a perfect time to start transition planning, review IEP goals, and strengthen skills. We look forward to building an even stronger community in the new year! From the Department of Exceptional Education to your family,

Happy Holidays and Happy New year!



Transition Talk: Planning for Success K-12

No matter your child's age, transition planning is key!

- **Preschool:** Emphasis on the development of foundational communication, social-emotional, and self help skills
- **Elementary:** Build independence with small tasks and self advocacy skills
- **Middle School:** Explore interest, career awareness, and organizational skills
- **High School:** Begin planning for postsecondary goals-college, independent living and employment





The long school breaks can feel overwhelming but with planning and flexibility families can create a season of joy and calm. Here are some strategies to help:

- **Keep routines** (as much as possible)

Children thrive on predictability. Try to maintain consistent wake-up, mealtime, and bedtime routines even during the break.

- **Prepare in advance and include changes if necessary**

Talk with your child about upcoming events or changes. Use visual aides, calendars, or countdowns to ease transitions.

- **Practice flexibility** If plans change model calm and reassure your child that it's okay.

- **Take breaks as a family** it's okay to decline invitations or leave early if your child needs downtime. Prioritizing their comfort helps everyone enjoy the season.

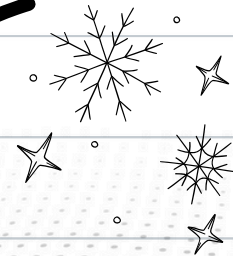
- **Include your child** Let them help decorate, choose music or pick activities they enjoy.



It's okay if the holidays feel more stressful than magical. You may experience a mix of emotions- joy, exhaustion, even guilt. Let yourself feel what you feel without judgement. Make sure to take small moments for yourself. Maybe a warm cup of coffee or hot chocolate, or a walk outside can bring emotional relief. Don't wait for a large window of time, find little moments to break and reconnect with yourself.



enjoy



MENTAL
HEALTH
MATTERS

DID YOU KNOW

Are you Prepared for Spring/Summer Break?



Most summer camp registrations open in the Spring! Check these out now!

Friendship Formulas-Ages 3-12 Who have difficulty with executive functions skills, challenging behaviors, ADD, ADHD, anxiety, sensory disorder, and autism



www.friendshipformulas.com
678-310-4676
info@friendshipformulas.com

Camp IMPAACT at the Ellis Center-Ages 5-22 Who use AAC devices



www.elliscenter.org/camp-impact
678.973.0483

Camp Hollywood at FOCUS - Ages 5-29
For Children to Adults with multiple disabilities



www.focus-ga.org/program
770-234-9111
inquiry@focus-ga.org

UPCOMING PARENT ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

January

Parent Education, Empowerment, Resources, and Support (PEERS) In-Person SESSION

Date: January 22, 2026

Topic: Overview of Special Education/Individualized Education Program (IEP) for Hispanic families

Time: 9:00 - 10:30am **Location:** Dresden Elementary School

Our January session will cover an overview of Special Education for our Hispanic families. This session will be conducted in Spanish.

March

Parent Education, Empowerment, Resources, and Support (PEERS) VIRTUAL SESSION

Date: March 26, 2026

Topic: DCSD Exceptional Education Related Services

Time: 6pm-7:30pm **Location:** Zoom

Our March session topic will cover Speech, Occupational, and Physical Therapy services and supports.

April

Exceptional Children's Week

Dates: April 13th-18th

Join the Department of Exceptional Education along with the National Council for Exceptional Children as we appreciate, celebrate and showcase the accomplishments of all students with disabilities!

Dates: April 16, 2026

Exceptional Award Ceremony, 6:00pm-8:00pm

This event is designed to recognize and award our students with disabilities! More details coming!

Resource Corner

Georgia Special Education PTSA is a new statewide organization focused on advocating for and supporting students with disabilities, their families, and educators in Georgia. They provide workshops, peer support, and legislative advocacy to improve inclusion and accommodations in Georgia schools.
jointotem.com/ga/atlanta/georgia-special-education-ptsa

WHO DO I CONTACT?

School Support

Your child's **SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER or CASEMANAGER:**

Concerns involving: Academics (grades, curriculum, classwork, homework), student behavior, interactions, and social-emotional development in the classroom (social skills, regulating emotions, making friends)

Your school's **LEAD TEACHER for SPECIAL EDUCATION (LTSE):**

Concerns involving: Initial Individualized Education Plans (IEP), re-evaluations, parental consent, IEP transportation issues, transferring IEP to a new school, case-manager/teacher communication issues

Your school **ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL:**

Concerns involving: Disciplinary actions, school safety, procedures & policies, inappropriate staff conduct, building maintenance, PTA, unresolved parent-teacher communication issues.

Your school **PRINCIPAL:**

All unresolved concerns brought to the Assistant Principal properly but were not addressed to satisfaction.

Section 504/Hospital Homebound (HHB) Office Support

Section 504 District Liaisons: Contact 678-676-1898

General questions or concerns regarding DCSD Section 504/ HHB guidelines, records requests, parent rights, special transportation & other related services. Contact your 504 Chairperson for additional concerns regarding eligibility, review meetings & communication issues.

School Support did not resolve your concern?

Need to speak to one of our Exceptional Education District Leaders? Please complete the Parent Communication Form.

If you've already tried working with all appropriate staff at your child's school (listed above) to resolve a concern & it has not been addressed to your satisfaction, please scan the QR code & complete the Parent Communication Form to talk with one of our Department of Exceptional Education Leadership. (listed below)



Department of Exceptional Education Leadership

Acting Special Education Director: Rolanda Johnson/Rolanda_Johnson@dekalbschoolsga.org

Concerns involving: All unresolved special education concerns and IEP related issues (implementation, meeting concerns, goals/objectives, progress monitoring, services) that have been previously communicated with the appropriate staff at your student's attendance school (see who to contact above first) but have not been addressed to satisfaction.

Senior Coordinator for School Psychology: Dr. Kimberly Franklin/kimberly_franklin@dekalbschoolsga.org

Parents should reach out to the Senior Coordinator of School Psychology when there are unresolved concerns that have been appropriately shared with the local school principal or designee that involves psychological services, evaluations, or mental health support for a child.

Senior Coordinator for Section 504/Hospital Homebound: Dr. Watina April/watina_april@dekalbschoolsga.org

Concerns involving: All unresolved concerns related to ensuring that a student is receiving appropriate accommodations & protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Unresolved concerns involving 504 plan development, eligibility, implementation or disability-based discrimination may require District level support.

Acting Executive Director of Exceptional Education: Dr. Erin Broyard-Baptiste/Erin_Broyard-Baptiste@dekalbschoolsga.org

Concerns involving: All unresolved concerns not fully addressed to satisfaction by school staff or Exceptional Education leadership in regards to ensuring a student with a disability receives appropriate and equitable educational services.

General Parent Support

DCSD Exceptional Education Department Parent Educator Team (**Parent Mentor/Parent Liaison**)

Comprised of parents of students with disabilities hired to educate parents on how to navigate the DCSD Special Education services & supports, transitions, parent rights, district protocols & processes, who to contact, resources, information & support.

Elementary Parent Mentor:
Kimberly_Robinson@dekalbschoolsga.org
Middle School Parent Mentor:
Torra_Hancock@dekalbschoolsga.org
High School Parent Liaison:
Lisa_Lake@dekalbschoolsga.org

Meet Your Parent Educator Team

WHAT IS A PARENT EDUCATOR TEAM?

Our Parent Educator Team are parents of children with disabilities employed by the school district. The team consists of one Parent Transition Liaison and two Part-Time Parent Mentors.



WHAT DOES THE PARENT EDUCATOR TEAM DO?

- Assist families of students with disabilities and educators in locating information and resources
- Provide workshops and events for families
- Provide confidential support for parental concerns and questions
- Provide a parent's perspective to educators



Kimberly Robinson
Parent Mentor

Pre-K and Elementary Schools

Kimberly_Robinson@dekalbschoolsga.org



Torra Hancock
Parent Mentor
Middle Schools

Torra_Hancock@dekalbschoolsga.org



Lisa Lake
Parent Transition Liaison
High Schools

Lisa_Lake@dekalbschoolsga.org

Please contact us at dcsdpeers@dekalbschoolsga.org

