



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

hello SUMMER

A NOTE FROM THE PARENT EDUCATOR TEAM

As we approach the end of the school year, we want to recognize the dedication, advocacy, and care you provide each day in support of your child. Your commitment plays a vital role in their growth and success.

As routines begin to shift and summer approaches, we encourage you to focus on connection, consistency, and meaningful moments. Learning doesn't have to be complex. Simple, everyday experiences can have a lasting impact.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, which serves as an important reminder that your well-being matters. Taking care of yourself is not separate from supporting your child—it is an essential part of it.

Please know that you are not alone. We are here to support and partner with you every step of the way.

DID YOU KNOW?



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

- Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May in the United States since 1949
- **Mental Health America (MHA)**, focuses on the theme "More Good Days, Together," promoting community support, reducing stigma, and providing practical tools for mental wellness
- Children's Mental Health Acceptance Week: May 3–9, 2026 – Theme: "Beyond the Screen: Education, Prevention, Connection"



PARENT EDUCATOR TEAM TIP

Taking care of yourself is not selfish; it's essential.

When you take care of yourself, you're also taking care of your child.



RESOURCES TO EXPLORE:

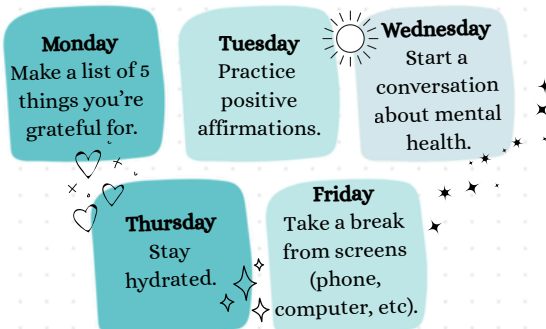
- **NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness):** www.nami.org
- Georgia Crisis and Access Line: 1-800-715-4225
- Online therapy platforms: BetterHelp, Talkspace, and others

CAREGIVER CORNER: Self-Care Strategies

- Build and lean on your support system
- Incorporate micro-breaks throughout the day
- Set realistic goals and expectations - progress over perfection
- Prioritize rest and mental health
- Ask for help when needed. You don't have to do it alone

→ WHERE TO START ←

Five Mental Health tips for the week



SUMMER ENGAGEMENT

Sensory-Friendly Learning

- **Tactile & Sensory Bins:** Create bins filled with dry rice, kinetic sand, water beads, or pasta, with hidden treasures for searching
- **Nature Exploration:** Organize sensory scavenger hunts to find items that are smooth, rough, warm, or cool. Listen to birds or touch tree bark to engage senses calmly
- **Water Activities:** Use sprinkler pads, water tables, or inflatable pools for fun and cooling without the noise of public pools (be sure to watch kids at all times around water)
- **DIY Obstacle Courses:** Use pool noodles, hula hoops, and chalk to build a backyard course that provides calming heavy work, such as jumping, crawling, and climbing



Academic Tips For The Summer Break

- Create a daily, visual schedule with built-in learning time
- Read at least 30 minutes a night with your child(ren)
- Take field trips to libraries, museums, local parks, and community spaces for hands-on learning, which helps build both academic and social skills
- Utilize hands-on activities (shopping, cooking) as learning opportunities
- Practice IEP goals/skills in real-life settings
- Keep learning fun, short, and consistent to prevent regression

Summer-to-School Transition

- Begin adjusting sleep schedules a few weeks before school starts
- Re-establish daily routines gradually throughout the summer
- Use visual schedules or social stories to discuss returning to school
- Visit the school, playground, or campus if possible before the first day
- Talk positively about school while acknowledging any worries or concerns
- Practice independence skills such as unpacking backpacks, following routines, or requesting help
- Review your child's IEP, accommodations, and supports before the school year begins
- Organize important school documents and ensure all required paperwork is updated and submitted
- If your child has medical needs or requires medication at school, contact your physician early to complete any required medical or medication authorization forms before the first day of school
- Establish communication with your child's educational team early to support collaboration and a smooth transition into the new school year



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



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Parent Mentor

Pre-K and Elementary Schools

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Torra Hancock
Parent Mentor

Middle Schools

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Lisa Lake
Parent Transition Liaison

High Schools

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Please contact us at dcsdpeers@dekalbschoolsga.org



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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

Interim 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.

Interim 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