

—February 2025 Issue 02—

Exceptional Education

'Excited to be Exceptional'



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**Social and Emotional
Learning (SEL) Focus**
**Multi-Tiered Sphere of
Support**
Upcoming Events

CONTACT US:
Department of Exceptional
Education
130 Trinity Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30303
404.802.1699
[Exceptional Education Website](#)

Building Strong **School-Home** Partnerships

As we move into the second semester, one of the most valuable areas of focus for students with special needs is the partnership between parents and schools. When families and educators collaborate, students benefit academically, socially, and emotionally. This month, we'll explore ways to strengthen this vital connection.

Why Strong Partnerships Matter

When parents and educators communicate regularly, students thrive. By working together, both parties ensure that a child's needs are met, their strengths are recognized, and challenges are addressed. Research shows that partnerships between families and schools lead to better outcomes for students.

How Parents Can Get Involved

Being involved doesn't mean attending every meeting, but regular engagement can make a big difference. Attend parent-teacher conferences, join school events or parent groups, and keep a communication log with the teacher. Proactive involvement sends the message that you are invested in your child's education.

Building Trust and Mutual Respect

Strong partnerships are built on trust and respect. Share your child's successes, work together to solve challenges, and stay patient as everyone works toward the best outcome for the child.

Conclusion

This month, take a step toward strengthening your partnership with your child's school. Whether it's reaching out to the teacher or attending meetings, your involvement helps create a supportive and enriching educational experience for your child.

Meet our Parent Mentors

The primary purpose of the Atlanta Public Schools' Parent Mentors is to support families of children with disabilities through information sharing and open communication. Parent mentors are trained to advise, educate, and assist parents regarding various issues related to special education services within APS schools. Currently, we have two parent mentors, Arkishya Anderson and Alicia Morris, who are both parents of children with disabilities and work part-time for the district. They collaborate with an Exceptional Education Coordinator to plan district-wide parent events. In addition, they address parent concerns, answer questions, assist families and staff in accessing information and resources, and offer a parent's perspective on the exceptional education process.



My name is Arkishya Anderson, and I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. I am an Atlanta Public School graduate of the former Southside High School, now known as Maynard Jackson High School. I am also a graduate of Atlanta Technical College, where I received a degree in Early Childhood Care and Education. Being a proud Parent Mentor, I have progressed into my second year supporting families of exceptional students.



My name is Alicia Morris, and I am originally from Michigan City, Indiana and moved to Georgia in 1996. I earned an Associate of Science degree from Georgia State University.

I am a proud mother of three wonderful children—an 18-year-old currently attending The University of Alabama, a 14-year-old aspiring to attend The University of Georgia (talk about a house divided), and a lively 2-year-old. I am eager to collaborate with parents and staff to support our students' success.



SAVE THE DATE

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

May 13, 2025

Lakewood Stadium

2025

PARENT

EXPO

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

FEATURING THE HOLLIS ACADEMY DRUM LINE

*DINNER WILL BE SERVED ON A FIRST COME,
FIRST SERVE BASIS!*

*The Parent Expo is open to all parents and guardians
of students with disabilities.
Spanish interpretation is available for the event.*

Event will be held on:



MARCH 13, 2025
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Location:



**ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STUDENT AND FAMILY
SUPPORT HUB**

601 Thomas Cole Jr Way, SW, Atlanta, GA 30314
(Formerly Beckwith Street)

Join our upcoming Parent Expo

- Interactive Sessions
- Vendors
- Student Performers
- Door Prizes
- Refreshments



REGISTER NOW



<https://tinyurl.com/DEE-Parent-Expo-2025>



404-802-2621



Contact
Patrice Stokes



pstokes@apsk12.org

Parent to Parent Spotlight

Article submitted by Dr. Cecille N. Bolton
Dr. Sunshine Presents, LLC. Owner/Creative
Former Atlanta Public Schools PreK Special Educator (2013-2021)



Greetings Pre-K Parents!

Picture this... Atlanta, May 2025! Your child's Pre-K journey is ending, and Kindergarten is on the horizon. You've experienced amazing support, and now you may be wondering—what's next? Will the teachers be just as patient, kind, and understanding?

Transitioning to Kindergarten may feel uncertain, but remember: you are ready! Say it with me... "KINDERGARTEN." The more you embrace it, the easier it will feel. Take a moment to reflect on the growth, challenges, and successes you and your child have experienced this year. You've worked hand-in-hand with teachers, cheered your child on, helped with homework, chaperoned field trips, and encouraged a love for learning—keep that energy!



Your child has gained essential skills, made new friends, and developed a foundation for success. As you step into this next phase, remember that not only is your child prepared, but so are you! Moving forward, lean on your new education team, uplift one another, and work together toward a common goal: SUCCESS.

Be patient and show grace as teachers and students adjust to new routines. Prepare the necessary paperwork, communicate medical or dietary needs, and share strategies that have worked at home for any behavioral challenges.

Most importantly, **LISTEN, LEARN, and LET GO:**

- **LISTEN** to your teacher teams. They are committed to creating the best learning environment for all students. #Grace
- **LEARN** from experiences, set expectations, and embrace the process with patience. #Patience
- **LET GO** of fear—approach this journey with positivity and collaboration. #ConnectCommunicateCollaborate

SPHERE OF SUPPORT

The **Exceptional Education Department** is a team of dedicated individuals providing multi-tiered sphere of support to meet the unique needs of every student and family. Below is a list of team members that are dedicated to support parents and students by providing guidance, resources and assistance to ensure academic and personal success.

Teacher/Case Manager

- Provides quality instruction
- Tracks the progress of students with special needs
- Ensures IEPs are executed properly with implementation of Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)
- Maintains communication with families and educators

Special Education Lead Teacher (SELTs)

- Ensures the implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Implements Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)
- Adheres to compliance timelines
- Supports classroom teachers
- Serves as mentors and provides instructional strategies to improve student outcomes



Cluster Coordinator

- Serves as a liaison between schools and the district
- Provides professional learning opportunities
- Ensures that the school complies with special education laws and guidelines
- Coordinates resources and support for students and collaborates with all stakeholders

Program Coordinator

- Focuses on overseeing district-wide programs
- Develops curricula
- Assesses program effectiveness across multiple schools
- Provides professional learning opportunities for staff

SEL Chronicles – “Check-In with Yourself” - February 2025

Checking in with your emotions is a necessary process that should be repeated regularly. When you check in with yourself, it allows you to recognize, understand, and acknowledge your feelings. Doing this as a practice increases your personal self-awareness. If you become more self-aware with how you feel at any given moment, you can improve your decision-making, build stronger relationships, manage your emotions better, including stress management, and become more effective with identifying potential triggers. Furthermore, knowing your triggers helps you take proactive steps to address them.



What You'll Need:

A Feelings Wheel

Steps:

1. Ask Yourself: “Which word describes my primary emotion right now?”
2. Next, Ask Yourself: “Now that I have a word, how intense is this emotion and how is it affecting me right now?”
3. Check In with Your Body: “What do I notice about my body right now? How is my body reacting to this feeling?”
4. Reflect: “What led me to feeling this way? What triggered this feeling?”
5. Next Steps: “What do I need right now to feel calmer, if needed?” (or) If this is an emotion I enjoy and one that supports me, “What can I do to sustain this feeling for longer?”