

—January 2025 Issue 01—

Exceptional Education

'Excited to be Exceptional'



INSIDE, WE ALSO TALK ABOUT:

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Superintendent**

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**Social and Emotional
Learning (SEL) Focus**

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[Exceptional Education Website](#)

It's an EXCEPTIONAL New Year

Welcome Back, Families!

We are delighted to welcome you and your children back for another amazing semester! As we begin the Spring Semester, we are excited to share some updates with you.

We are proud to announce that our department has been renamed from Special Education to **Exceptional Education**. This change reflects our commitment to celebrating the strengths, talents, and unique potential of every student. The name "Exceptional Education" aligns with our mission to provide inclusive and empowering opportunities for all learners. Also, this shift aligns with the GaDoE shift from Special Education to Exceptional Children.

Additionally, we are thrilled to introduce our new newsletter. This newsletter will serve as a bridge to keep you informed, inspired, and connected. Each edition will share important updates, provide helpful resources, and celebrate the exceptional progress happening in our community.

We look forward to partnering with you in fostering excellence and growth this school year. Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to your child's educational success. Together, we can make this year truly exceptional!



**Meet the Interim Assistant Superintendent,
Dr. Shateena Love**

It is an honor to work with talented instructors and school leaders to serve and support the *Exceptional Students* of Atlanta Public Schools. This coveted role allows me to utilize my foundational learning and career experience as a Special Education teacher with a BS in Varying Exceptionalities.

As I reflect on the opportunities in our department, I am deeply motivated by my belief in the power of public education. My experience as an educational leader has shown me time and time again that, even in challenging circumstances, schools can thrive, communities can unite, and meaningful progress is possible. I am fully committed to supporting and advancing the work ahead, from the classroom to the broader community, with a clear focus on addressing the needs that will drive the success and achievement of our students.

**"There is something GREAT
about every student and adult
we encounter.
It is a teacher's job to help
them realize that
GREATNESS"**

I am here to serve and can be reached at:
Shateena.love@apsk12.org
404-802-1681 (wk)
404-862-6629 (cell)



**Januray 9th, 5:30 to 6:30
Parent Support Group via Zoom**

Topic: Overview of Assistive Technology

<https://atlantapublicschools-us.zoom.us/j/84335604972?pwd=UL2or6Dbc2aqwj87ivdcV6ragS1L17.1>

Meeting ID: 843 3560 4972 Passcode : 011522

**January 29th, 5:30 to 6:30
Virtual Parent C.A.F.E.**

Topic: Social Security Administration

<https://atlantapublicschools-us.zoom.us/j/84584782948?pwd=NEXxTzmxw08o6uc4POejElBxOLcVI7.1>

Meeting ID: 845 8478 2948 Passcode: 9Ttwu5

PARENT CLUSTER NIGHTS

Join the Department of Exceptional Education for the opportunity to meet with district and school staff who support exceptional students, ask questions, receive feedback and resources related to special education.

CARVER

JANUARY 22, 2025
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
CARVER EARLY COLLEGE



DOUGLASS

JANUARY 28, 2025
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
BOYD ELEMENTARY



JACKSON

FEBRUARY 3, 2025
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
BURGESS-PETERSON ELEMENTARY



MAYS

FEBRUARY 5, 2025
5:30 PM – 6:30 PM
BENJAMIN E. MAYS HIGH SCHOOL



MIDTOWN

JANUARY 27, 2025
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
HOWARD MIDDLE SCHOOL



N. ATLANTA

JANUARY 30, 2025
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
JACKSON ELEMENTARY



S. ATLANTA

JANUARY 23, 2025
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
HERITAGE ACADEMY



THERRELL

JANUARY 21, 2025
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
FICKETT ELEMENTARY



WASHINGTON

FEBRUARY 6, 2025
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
HERMAN J RUSSELL ACADEMY



Parent to Parent Spotlight

Article submitted by Tanyika Mayhew Butler
Parent to a 23 year old daughter with an autism diagnosis, ADHD, IDD and EBD



Are You READY to Return Without the Meltdowns?

Returning to school after a long break can be both exciting and overwhelming as you navigate re-establishing routines. As a parent and educator, I've faced the joys of getting back to structure and the challenges of adjustment—especially with my daughter Kendall, who struggled after long breaks.

Transitions can be tough for children, particularly those with unique needs, and signs of anxiety are often mistaken for defiance. Recognizing these signs and preparing in advance can make a huge difference.

Let's Get READY!

- **R – Recognize the Signs:** Watch for clues like difficulty sleeping, irritability, or physical complaints (e.g., stomach aches). Early recognition helps ease the transition.
- **E – Establish Predictability:** Reinforce routines, especially bedtime, with calming activities like reading or listening to soft music.
- **A – Allow Time to Adjust:** Give your child a few days to practice the school schedule, from wake-up times to packing their bag.
- **D – Discuss Feelings Openly:** Encourage conversations about their thoughts and feelings, using visuals if needed. Reassure them it's okay to feel nervous.
- **Y – Yield to Flexibility:** Stick to routines but offer patience and grace during the first few days, celebrating small wins.

For my daughter Kendall, a consistent night time routine was her anchor during these transitions. Predictability creates a sense of security that reduces anxiety and helps children adjust more easily.

By staying consistent and supportive, you can make the return to school smoother and more rewarding for both you and your child.

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



The start of a new semester is the perfect time to focus on helping children build their self-management skills. In APS, this month's **Social and Emotional Learning** theme is **COURAGE** – the inner strength to face challenges, take risks, and pursue goals even when the path is uncertain.

This activity encourages students to set a courageous goal and use self-management strategies to achieve it.

What You'll Need: A notebook or piece of paper, markers or pens and sticky notes

Steps:

1. **Name the Goal:** Have your child think of a goal that feels both exciting and a little challenging. For example, "I want to make a new friend" or "I will complete my math homework without getting upset." Write the goal at the top of the paper.
2. **List Courageous Steps:** Work together to break the goal into smaller steps. For instance, if the goal is making a friend, the steps might include smiling at someone or saying hello. Write each step on a sticky note.
3. **Create a Calm Plan:** Discuss how they might feel during each step (e.g., nervous, excited) and practice a calming strategy, like deep breathing, to use if those feelings arise.
4. **Build a Courage Ladder:** Arrange the sticky notes in order of difficulty, starting with the easiest step. Encourage your child to complete one step at a time, checking it off or removing the note when finished.
5. **Celebrate Progress:** When your child completes their goal, celebrate with words of encouragement, a special activity, or a small treat to acknowledge their bravery.

COURAGEOUS