

Exceptional Education

'Excited to be Exceptional'



INSIDE, WE ALSO TALK ABOUT:

Spring Break Ready

Note from Counseling Team

SEL Test Strategies

**Multi-Tiered Sphere of
Support**

Upcoming Events

March Madness

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Spring Break and State Testing: A Time for Rest and Readiness

As we welcome Spring, families and educators alike are looking forward to spring break—a well-deserved time for rest, rejuvenation, and quality time together. However, as we enjoy the break, it's also important to keep in mind that state testing is just around the corner. For students receiving special education services, balancing relaxation with gentle preparation can make all the difference in reducing stress and fostering success.

Spring Break Tips

- **Keep a Routine:** Maintain regular wake-up and bedtimes for an easier return to school.
- **Engage in Fun Learning:** Reading, educational games, and hands-on activities keep skills fresh.
- **Review Test Strategies:** Brief, low-pressure practice can help students feel prepared.

State Testing Readiness

- **Know Accommodations:** Check your child's IEP or 504 Plan for necessary supports.
- **Encourage Positivity:** Focus on effort rather than perfection.
- **Practice Relaxation:** Breathing exercises and movement breaks can ease stress.
- **Prioritize Rest & Nutrition:** Good sleep and a healthy breakfast improve focus.

Balancing rest with gentle prep helps students return ready for success. For questions about testing accommodations, reach out to your child's teacher or case manager. Wishing all our families a great Spring Semester!

A Message from the District's Counseling Team

██████████ SCHOOL COUNSELING CONNECTIONS

Jennifer Wilson, Coordinator of School Counseling (K-8)

Lowering Testing Stress and Preparing Students for Georgia Milestones (GMAS) Testing

We've all heard that practice makes perfect. For many students who will take the GMAS online having a chance to practice using the testing platform so they can try out the tools can reduce stress on exam day.

By visiting www.gaexperienceonline.com, you can allow your scholar to experience the platform and the available online tools.

The APS Counseling Department created a scavenger hunt to serve as a guide to make sure you get the most out of this website. Click the picture to access the scavenger hunt. Students may also like a reminder of what their teachers have shown them are the kinds of questions they can expect. These can be found in study guides available through the GaDOE. You can find GMAS study guides at <http://tinyAPS.com/?GMAS25>. ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶



Parents.....We Want to Hear from You!

Your journey as a parent of a child with special needs is unique, filled with challenges, victories, and invaluable lessons. The Exceptional Education department invites you to share your story, advice, or words of encouragement with other parents who may be walking a similar path. Your insight could provide hope, guidance, and a sense of community to families who need it most.

Submissions should be no more than 300 words and will be randomly selected to be featured in the 'Parent to Parent' section of the monthly newsletter. Together, we will build a stronger, more supportive network of parents! Please visit the Department of Exceptional Education website for submissions.

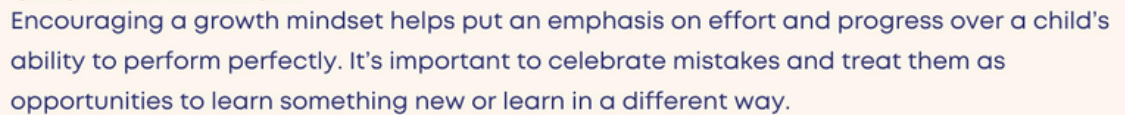
SEL STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT TEST PREPAREDNESS

The diagram illustrates 48 human emotions arranged in a circular pattern around a central color wheel. The emotions are grouped into four quadrants based on their primary color:

- Sad (Orange Quadrant):** Regretful, Hopeless, Betrayed, Unmotivated, Disappointed, Peaceful, Relaxed, Sentimental, Content, Optimistic, Accepting, Satisfied.
- Fear (Blue Quadrant):** Anxious, Skeptical, Overwhelmed, Tension, Paranoid, Confused, Frustrated, Aggravated, Disgust, Aggressive, Hostile, Irritated.
- Strong (Yellow Quadrant):** Proud, Powerful, Rejected, Jealous, Grumpy, Bitter, Annoyed, Rage, Stress, Shock, Worry, Panic.
- Happy (Red Quadrant):** Joyful, Glee, Bliss, Joy, Fun, Cheerful, Excited, Pleasure, Enthusiastic, Amused, Satisfied, Accepting.

The central color wheel features four main colors: orange, blue, yellow, and red, each corresponding to one of the four quadrants.

SEL practices for emotional regulation and growth mindset enhances learning, reduces anxiety, improves focus, and boosts problem-solving—leading to better test performance and a positive experience.



Building problem-solving skills in children helps them to work through a challenge by using an organized thinking process to brainstorm possible solutions. This will also help them begin to view challenges as opportunities to think critically and creatively.

Breathing exercises or mindful moments at home, before upcoming tests at school, will help to calm the nervous system. This calmer nervous system will help children to approach testing with a clear, focused, and prepared mind.

Application at Home: Gather items to help self-regulate (stress balls, stuffed animals, coloring or blank pages for doodling, journals, etc.) Add these items to a box and label “Calming Toolbox”. Find electronic resources and save for later, like calming music, online stretching exercises, or YouTube deep breathing videos. Encourage your child to use their toolbox and electronic resources when they feel overwhelmed.

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

Exceptional Education Lead Teacher (EELTs)

- 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



SPECIAL OLYMPICS #APSSpecialOlympics

TRACK & FIELD GAMES

Come join the fun at the 30th annual Special Olympics Track & Field Games!

Wednesday, May 14, 2025
10 a.m. at Lakewood Stadium
Rain date: Thursday, May 15

Enjoy food trucks and a live DJ! Cheer for our APS student-athletes as they compete and showcase their skills and talents in multiple outdoor racing and field events:

- Long jump
- Standing long jump
- Shot put
- Tennis ball throw
- Softball throw
- Beanbag toss

APS staff volunteers are needed to support our students! Multiple stations are available. Scan the code to register or visit <http://tinyAPS.com/TVolunteerAPS>

Parents and community supporters are welcome to attend.



PARENT EXPO

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

FEATURING THE HOLLIS ACADEMY DRUM LINE

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 25, 2025

Join our upcoming Parent Expo!

- Interactive Sessions
- Vendors
- Student Performers
- Door Prizes

APS EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT PROM

SPECIAL EVENT FOR OUR VERY SPECIAL STUDENTS
"A MAGICAL NIGHT IN DISNEY"

JOIN US FOR A MAGICAL NIGHT AT DISNEY



AUTISM AWARENESS

Celebrate at APS March 31-April 2, 2025

Monday March 31, 2025
Activity: Brainstorming for Acceptance
Students come up with creative ways to spread acceptance and understanding.
Spirit Day #1: Blend Together- Tie Dye Day

Tuesday April 1, 2025
Activity: Empathy Walk
Students walk in the shoes of someone with autism by participating in sensory and social simulations.
Spirit Day #2: Together Everyone Accomplishes More- Favorite Sports

Wednesday April 2, 2025
Activity: Friendship Bracelet Making
Students create bracelets to show their support for individuals with autism. This activity could also be done by making friendship bracelets and using them to show their support for individuals with autism.
Spirit Day #3: Light It Up Blue (Everyone wear Blue)

Thursday April 3, 2025
Activity: ...

