



# Panther Press

A publication of the Georgia Academy for the Blind

**Friday, November 17, 2023**

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider*

Dr. Cindy Gibson, Superintendent

2895 Vineville Ave. Macon, GA



Georgia Academy for the Blind

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## Mark your Calendar

**11/20 through 11/24 - Thanksgiving BREAK**

**12/5 - Student Art Exhibit at Wesleyan College  
from 6 to 7PM.**

**12/8 - Next School Council Meeting,  
Friday at 1:00**

**12/14 - Art Exhibit & Sale at 9:30AM in the Foyer  
of the Auditorium**

**12/14 - Holiday Concert at 10:30AM in  
Auditorium**

**12/15 through 1/3 - Holiday Break**



I'm thankful for so many things this Thanksgiving: family, health, my job, close friends and another school year at GAB! In my job, I'm especially thankful for parent involvement, as it enhances our school, making it a better place for all. Pictured left is Ryder, eating lunch with his Mom, and Ms. Layson, his teacher, photo bombing haha...Wishing you all a *great* Thanksgiving Break with many memories made. - J. Minter

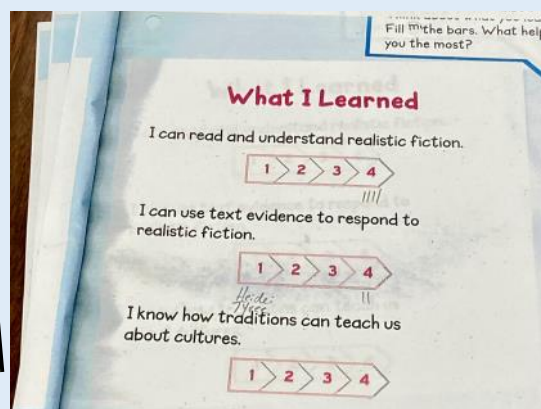


# A message from our Superintendent

Dear GAB Families,

As we pause for holiday, we wish you a safe and happy Thanksgiving season. We are grateful for having you at GAB and having the privilege to serve your students.

This week has been instruction full steam ahead! The Department of State Schools (DOSS) Curriculum Unit came for a site visit in support of our implementation of a new District English Language Arts curriculum. In Mr. Todd Lyon's class, with his paraprofessional, Cheryl Stokes, students Jermaine, Jazz, Jaden, Tyree, and Heidi were completing a unit on communicating culture. The students used tactile symbols to indicate their level of understanding the criteria, then instruction targeting the areas where they indicated a need for more knowledge proceeded. Every student was a leader in some aspect of the lesson. Their summative project is to design an invitation to a party, considering the cultures of the targeted invitees. We'll see what happens! Jazz wowed Mr. Fuss with her reading, and Heidi has really grown in her use of braille. Teaching and Learning are magic under the watchful guidance of Mr. Lyon's monitoring for understanding and engagement. In this class Mr. Lyon showed us the teacher talks little and purposefully. The students take charge of their learning!





# Teacher of the Year

I am proud to announce the Georgia Academy for the Blind Teacher of the Year Dr. Cheryl Washington! Dr. Washington is a teacher of computer technology and applications, and much loved by her students and peers. We are a package deal and have been together except for a brief time since the year 2000! Dr. Washington, a die-hard Georgia Bulldog, is from Savannah, Georgia, and because she was working in Savannah had to be interviewed on a Saturday! Thus, I called in faculty at the high school where I was principal to interview and recruit. Dr.

Washington was a favorite for the seven years

that we served at that high school. Then, during the time I was teaching computer technology and applications at GAB, for three years, Dr. Washington moved to Henry County. As I was accepting the role of administrator at GAB, I contacted Dr. Washington to see where she was in her career goals. I

introduced her to the then Director, Dr. Dorothy Arensman, and the bond was forged in 2011! Dr.

Washington is an

exemplar of student advocacy and meeting the students where they are. Her influence and teaching are evidenced in the number of students who email and reach out to be sure she is still here! Sometimes we say students can never know how much they are loved, but in this case, Dr. Washington's students know that she teaches with unconditional love.

*As Ever, Cindy*





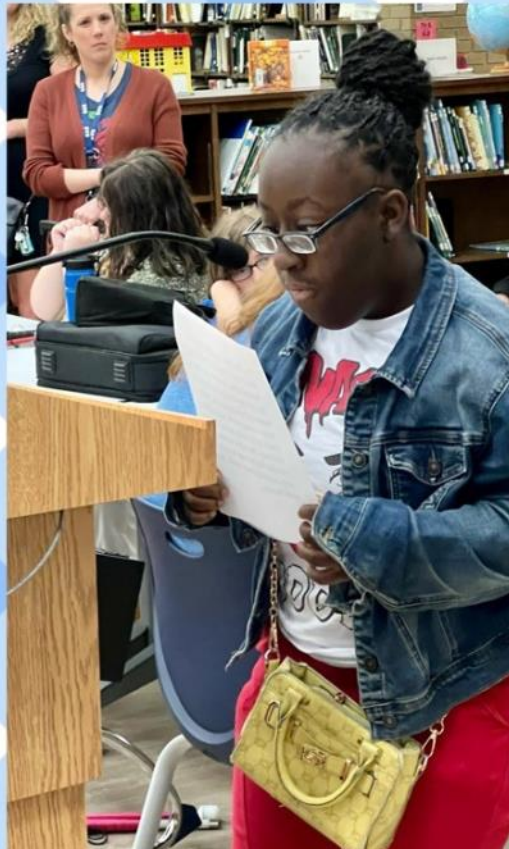
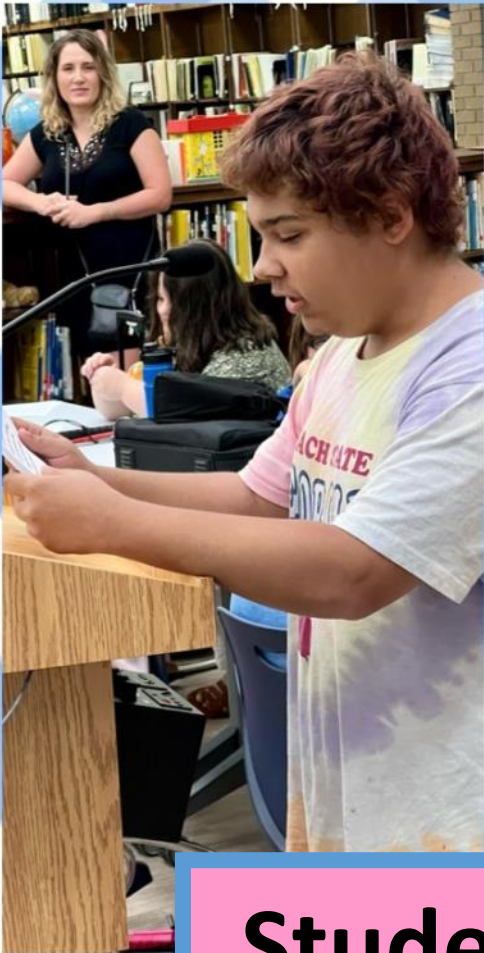


## Student Council

The GAB Student Council is up and running, and the members are ready to serve their school and community! We started the year with elections. The candidates delivered speeches to the student body at an assembly. Mr. Acree and Ms. Eckman, the sponsors, are so proud of the students for their performance in GAB's first candidates' assembly. They were brave and bold in their delivery, and some even included special cheers at the end! After the speeches, the student body voted and elected Maddie (President), Zy (Vice President), Heidei (Secretary), Berkley, Jazalyn, Destiny, James, Devin, Will, Ame, and Peyton. The newly elected members started their first service project of the year—Holiday Cards for Healthcare Heroes. The members signed 50 holiday cards and enclosed special messages of holiday cheer, thanks, and encouragement for nurses at a local hospital, Atrium Navicent Health.

**Our next service project will be a canned food drive. Stay tuned for more information!**



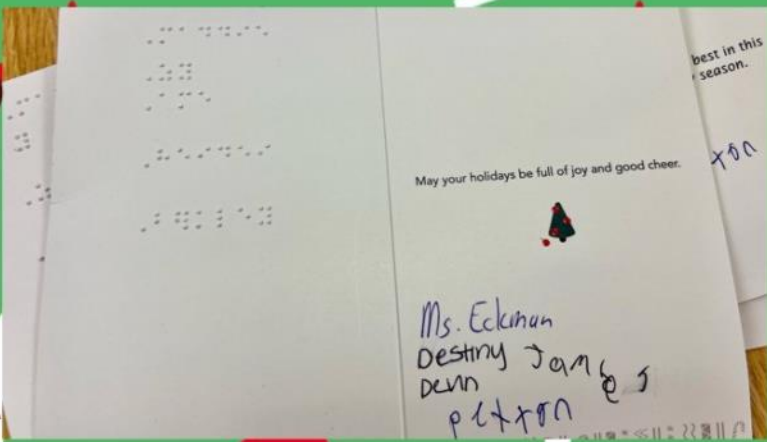


# Student Council Speeches





# HOLIDAY CARDS





# The Power of Collective Efficacy

*Jenni Donohoo, John Hattie and Rachel Eells*

When teams of educators believe they have the ability to make a difference, exciting things can happen in a school.

In the 1970s, Albert Bandura, a psychologist at Stanford University, uncovered an interesting pattern in working-group dynamics. He observed (1977) that a group's confidence in its abilities seemed to be associated with greater success. In other words, the assurance a person places in his or her team affects the team's overall performance. Researchers have since found this to be true across many domains. When a team of individuals share the belief that through their unified efforts they can overcome challenges and produce intended results, groups *are* more effective. For example, in communities where neighbors share the belief that they can band together to overcome crime, there is significantly less violence (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). In companies, when team members hold positive beliefs about the team's capabilities, there is greater creativity and productivity (Kim & Shin, 2015). And in schools, when educators believe in their combined ability to influence student outcomes, there are significantly higher levels of academic achievement (Bandura, 1993).

Bandura named this interesting pattern in human behavior "collective efficacy," which he defined as "a group's shared belief in its conjoint capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). There have been many studies investigating collective efficacy in schools—this is not a new topic. By the turn of the century, collective teacher efficacy had been operationalized, and instruments had been developed to measure it (Goddard, 2002). Models for collective efficacy in schools have been tested and refined, with researchers finding that as successes and support strengthen teachers' confidence in their teams, student achievement increases as well (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Adams & Forsyth, 2006).

Rachel Eells's (2011) meta-analysis of studies related to collective efficacy and achievement in education demonstrated that the beliefs teachers hold about the ability of the school as a





whole are "strongly and positively associated with student achievement across subject areas and in multiple locations" (p. 110). On the basis of Eells's research, John Hattie positioned collective efficacy at the top of the list of factors that influence student achievement (Hattie, 2016). According to his Visible Learning research, based on a synthesis of more than 1,500 meta-analyses, collective teacher efficacy is greater than three times more powerful and predictive of student achievement than socioeconomic status. It is more than double the effect of prior achievement and more than triple the effect of home environment and parental involvement. It is also greater than three times more predictive of student achievement than student motivation and concentration, persistence, and engagement (see fig. 1).

**Figure 1. Factors Influencing Student Achievement**

Influence	Effect Size
Collective Teacher Efficacy	1.57
Prior achievement	0.65
Socioeconomic status	0.52
Home environment	0.52
Parental involvement	0.49
Motivation	0.48
Concentration/persistence/engagement	0.48
Homework	0.29
<p>Note: Effect sizes are based on Cohen's d. The average effect size is <math>d=0.40</math>.</p> <p>This average summarizes the typical effect of all possible influences on education.</p> <p>Source: John Hattie</p>	

## Cultural Beliefs

Since collective efficacy influences how educators feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1993), it is a major contributor to the tenor of a school's culture. When educators share a sense of collective efficacy, school cultures tend to be characterized by beliefs that reflect high expectations for student success. A shared language that represents a focus on



student *learning* as opposed to *instructional compliance* often emerges. The perceptions that influence the actions of educators include "We are evaluators," "We are change agents," and "We collaborate." Teachers and leaders believe that it is their fundamental task to evaluate the effect of their practice on students' progress and achievement. They also believe that success and failure in student learning is more about what they did or did not do, and they place value in solving problems of practice together (Hattie & Zierer, 2018).

When efficacy is present in a school culture, educators' efforts are enhanced—especially when they are faced with difficult challenges. Since expectations for success are high, teachers and leaders approach their work with an intensified persistence and strong resolve.

In addition, collective efficacy influences student achievement indirectly through productive patterns of teaching behavior. Such behaviors include implementing high-yield strategies—for example, integrating literacy instruction in content-area classrooms (Cantrell & Callaway, 2008), soliciting parental involvement (Kirby & DiPaola, 2011), and finding productive ways to deal with problem behavior (Gibbs & Powell, 2011). Clearly, collective efficacy has a large ripple effect.

Conversely, if educators' perceptions are filtered through the belief that there is very little they can do to influence student achievement, negative beliefs pervade the school culture. When educators lack a sense of collective efficacy, they do not pursue certain courses of action because they feel they or their students lack the capabilities to achieve positive outcomes. The culture reflects a solemn satisfaction with the status quo. School communities experience an inclination to stop trying, decreased expectations, and lower levels of performance (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). In addition, when collective teacher efficacy is lacking, educators are more likely to ascribe failure to students' lack of ability, seek exclusion for challenging students (Gibbs & Powell, 2011), and experience higher levels of stress (Klassen, 2010; Lim & Eo, 2014). Conversations are often reflective of external blame, or an "us" versus "them" mentality.

### **The Role of Evidence**

So how do school leaders build collective efficacy? The primary input is *evidence of impact*. When instructional improvement efforts result in improved student outcomes that are validated through sources of student learning data, educators' collective efficacy is strengthened. Evidence of collective impact, in turn, reinforces proactive collective behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and motivations. Bandura referred to this as "reciprocal causality" (Bandura, 1993), noting that collective efficacy is a social resource that does not get depleted by its use; it gets renewed.

It is essential, therefore, to help educators make the link between their collective actions and student outcomes. To understand collective impact, teams need to determine if changes in



classroom practice positively influenced student outcomes by examining specific evidence of student learning. They need to hear from students about their learning, their progress, their struggles, and their motivation to keep learning. They need to examine student artifacts such as assignments, tests, portfolios, and other indicators of daily progress. With all these activities, the key is making the link between teachers' actions and student outcomes explicit, so that teachers understand that the factors behind student progress are within their collective sphere of influence.

School leaders play a key role in creating non-threatening, evidence-based instructional environments. By promoting a culture of collaboration focused on "knowing thy collective impact," leaders have the potential to support school improvement in ways that positively influence teachers' collective efficacy beliefs and thus promote student achievement. Leaders do this by engaging in conversations with teachers about the meaning of impact, about the difference between achievement goals and progress, and about the use of dependable evidence. These conversations help to shift educators' thinking from task-related concerns (for example, "How much of my time is x going to require?" or "How will I manage x as part of my daily routine?") to broader impact concerns ("What was the impact when I did x?" "How did x affect the students in my classroom?" "How can we work together to make x even better?"). Teachers can increasingly orient their work around outcomes: "Did the students gain the essential understandings and skills?" "How do we know?" "How can we use evidence of student learning to improve classroom instruction?"

Leaders can also influence collective efficacy by setting expectations for formal, frequent, and productive teacher collaboration and by creating high levels of trust for this collaboration to take place. "Productive" means that teachers' collaborative efforts can help to account for consequences in the classroom. The emphasis should be on identifying student learning needs and detecting problems that need to be addressed in classrooms, using a variety of evidence to determine if approaches made a difference, and making adjustments as necessary. When leaders ensure that dependable, high trust, collaborative structures are in place, teachers learn from and with one another and build common understandings. Teachers need to see how collecting evidence fits into their daily routines, how they can use daily evidence to determine impact, and how they can make adjustments to their classroom practices when results aren't demonstrating increases in student outcomes.

Building common conceptions of progress requires more than just the structures that increase forms of collaboration. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) warn about "administrative contrivances" that become artificial and short-lived. In addition, the collective impact typically only occurs where there are high levels of social sensitivity among the group members. Therefore, school leaders must foster empathy and effective interaction among teams. Administrators can model social sensitivity by paying close attention to verbal and nonverbal clues and exercising



# Unstable Housing Happens! Now what?



## GAB Families,

Times are tough! We realize that we are in a season of change and challenges with our economy that lead to temporary living situations or “doubling up” with others. Though we have no solutions for this, we have many other ways to support our students and their families, including expediting school transportation and assuring our students miss as little school as reasonable.

1. There is a federal law that aims to protect our students by keeping them in school in a stable and consistent manner. Learn more in this video:  
[what is mckinney vento program - - Video Search Results \(yahoo.com\)](#)
2. This PRIVATE survey is designed to help us meet your needs. Complete from this link and we will be in touch with you promptly.  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/V53SCGZ>
3. We are working with the Georgia Alliance to end homelessness where there is a person dedicated to helping our families. Please reach out to Sonya Milam [sonya.milam@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:sonya.milam@doe.k12.ga.us) 478-751-6083, ext 1142 so that she may connect you to this viable resource.



# November Birthdays

Ja'Miyah 11/2

Peyton 11/2

Jazalyn 11/6

De'andre 11/20

