



Panther Press

A publication of the Georgia Academy for the Blind

Friday, March 12th, 2021

This institution is an equal opportunity provider

Dr. Cindy Gibson, Superintendent

2895 Vineville Avenue

Macon, GA 31204

478-751-6083



Georgia Academy for
the Blind - GAB



Follow our library:

@gablibrary

Mission Statement: The Georgia Academy for the Blind provides quality education services to Georgia's students with visual impairments and/or visual impairments in conjunction with other disabilities to prepare them to achieve their highest level of independence in transition to college and career readiness. *Check out this student produced video featuring this Mission Statement:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRbhhkGSe98>

Mark your Calendars

3/29 through 4/5 - Spring Break Week with Easter Holiday
Residential students return on Monday 4/5.

5/20 - Prom at Morgan View Farm

5/21 - Graduation on GAB campus

Daylight Saving Time begins on Sunday, March 14, 2021 at 2:00 A.M.

On Saturday night, set your clocks forward one hour



**(i.e., losing one hour)
to "spring ahead."**



This newsletter is published by our Parent Mentor/Family Engagement Specialist, Jennifer Minter. Please send your ideas, news and resources in your community to her: JMinter@doe.k12.ga.us or call **478-262-3303**. ***Please remember to contact her if you've had a change in address, phone number and/or email!***

A message from our Superintendent

Dear GAB Family,

So where were you one year ago (It was Friday, March 13, 2020.) when you received the news that schools would be closed due to the ensuing pandemic??? That created a pandemic of its own kind!! For sure, “better is the end of the thing than the beginning!” We are making progress toward safety and an element of normalcy and enthusiasm to greet welcome change is tremendous.

This has been a fast week for us at GAB. I cannot believe another Friday has rolled around. The weeks are ticking away, and there is so much still to do. Big news of the week: Testing season has officially begun and Assistant Principal, Jon Smith has coordinated with case managers and parent/guardians about testing onsite and waivers for applicable students. Contact Mr. Smith or your case manager if you have questions. We appreciate Superintendent Richard Woods’ leadership to decrease the hardship of high stakes testing in this solid year of COVID-19 necessitated instruction.

COVID Vaccinations are going full throttle. See the joy that a sense of safety has returned. All who want the vaccine have the opportunity to receive it from various locations, but the Bibb County Health Department has completely cordoned time to ensure that the GAB staff are served. When a person receives a personal call from the Director himself, we know that safety for our staff and students is top priority to our local leaders!

Please note that the sunset on virtual instruction is May 21, 2021. School year 2021-2022 will provide onsite programming only. This information will continue to be communicated in IEP meetings. Do make plans accordingly. We are pleased to have provided virtual instruction as chosen by families this year.

Thank you for responding to interest surveys for Summer Enrichment Program. Unfortunately, we have limited staff available during the summer to work the program. There will be a 3-day program (June 7-9) for students who have VI with additional disabilities. A one-week program will be available for VI students who need academic enrichment (June 6-11). We will be sending out applications soon. Please reach out to Dawn Day, Curriculum Director, mday@doe.k12.ga.us if you need more information or have questions. We are filled with untold excitement to provide this enrichment opportunity.

School Council minutes from the February 19, 2021, meeting are included in this edition. Please review and consider joining us for the next meeting which is **March 19, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.**

In our previous meeting we discussed a change of time, but there have been conflicts that indicate 1:00 is the best time.

Thank you for all that you do to promote a quality program for our children.

Together we are a strong family.

Always,

Cindy

Our first two vaccinates!
They were surprised to get the one and done Johnson and Johnson version instead of the touted Moderna they were expecting. Thank you to Dr. Jimmie Smith and the Macon-Bibb County Health Department.



School Council Meeting Minutes February 19, 2021

Dr. Gibson brings the meeting to order and lets all attendees introduce themselves:

Tylishia Brown

Michael Collins

Shirley Wingfield

Cheryl Parsons

Donna West

Leslie O'Neil

Ms. Whitehead (Josiah)

Amy Bardash

David Guest

Frank Reynolds

Kezia Bloodsaw

Dawn Day

Cindy Gibson

Jennifer Minter

Jon Smith

Alicia Jackson

Octavian Burch (joined after the introductions)

Approval of the Agenda: Approved

Calendar (draft for 2021-2022 is reviewed)

Face to Face Prom and Graduation plans are underway. We are looking at outside venues with enough space for social distancing. We have reached out to the class of 2020 and 2021. The current plan is to have graduation practice during the day on Thursday, have the prom Thursday night and graduation service on Friday. That is May 20th and 21st

In our last School Council meeting we discussed our need for officers. WE need a Chair a Vice-Chair and a secretary. The officers do not have to be parents. But, this is your opportunity to be involved and to share your thoughts and needs. Donna West has volunteered to be our Chair. Do I get a vote for Donna West. (YES) Do I get a second. (second) all in favor; Everyone was in favor. Donna West is voted in. The purpose of School Council is advocacy. Reaching out and getting others to attend. IT loops parents in and gives the opportunity to share concerns or to ask questions.

Summer Program: normally we have a 1 week Summer Program. It is voluntary and it is residential for the week. This year we are planning to offer 2 weeks of Summer Programs focusing on Literacy and Enrichment. It is not required. But, we did start school three weeks late. We did not have a Fall Break, so we still have two weeks to offer. Dawn Day, our Curriculum Director will be in charge of our Summer Program. We will offer extra-curricular activities, physical activities, our pool will be open and we hope to be able to use community sites and offer all related services. This program will be first and foremost for our GAB students

Dawn Day: We are very excited. Literacy is very important and we hope this all works out and that we will see your children in these programs.

Cindy Gibson: we will send out the proposed dates in the next Newsletter. The proposed dates are June 7-11 and June 14-18. GAB students can come to both or choose 1.

Leslie O'neil has volunteered to be our vice-chair. Do I hear a motion (Yes), a second, (yes)
All in favor: all are in favor. Approved.

CG: This is the best attendance with more parental involvement that we have had in School Council. We know it is not convenient to meet in the middle of your busy day, and we thank you for your participation and taking the time to be here. We want to know how we can help you.

Standing Reports

Jennifer Minter: in the last two newsletters a parent survey was sent out. Please take the survey. This allows the State GADOE to get feedback from you and it helps them to fund the needs for special education and IEP requirements. It is very important. It is very important that in the first question that asks your school district that you scroll all the way down to State Schools. Once you choose State Schools you should see the option to choose GAB. You should only see the three state schools.

If you choose your county district, then it looks like none of our parents have taken the survey. I am going to be sending the link out again in an email and try to text it. If you have question when you are trying to find GAB, please call me.

Teacher Reports:

Amy Bardash: not much has changed since the last meeting. We are still preparing for Milestone Testing. Still working with students and their technology needs. We are getting new assistive technology tools for their tool belts. WE have a good flow. Things are going well.

David Guest: We understand the frustration that some virtual students are having with wi-fi issues and we are working on it. After School Program is showing good success, the M.S. students are showing good progress with one on one time.

Michael Collins asks about After School Program. Is it available to all? Is it academic? Are there any sports available? Wrestling, Goal ball?

Dawn Day explains that it is academic and all are welcome to attend. If your student is a day student, then they have to have someone who can pick them up at 5:00 pm. Shirley Wingfield asks if a student must be on campus to attend ASP, or can they attend virtually. Dr. Gibson answers, they must be on campus.

Parent Reports:

Da'Quan's mother says he left school and went to another district, but is coming back. She says they might need a wi-fi hot spot. She needs to know how he will get his technology. Dr. Gibson explains that that will all be worked out at his IEP Meeting. Ms. Tracie Z is working with his county now to get that scheduled. Da'Quan's mother says, he went to that other school but it was so different, he wanted to come back.

All other parents in attendance indicate everything is good.

Dr. Gibson: if anything changes, let us know. We know students can't keep their face in computer screen 7 hours a day. We try to be sensitive to that and give them some independent time. I hope they are taking breaks, getting up and walking around, drinking water, being good to themselves.

Cottage Report: Mr. Reynolds: Everything is going well are looking forward to graduation.

Superintendent Report: Cindy Gibson: getting new roof on gym. We have had to move our classes from the gym. Our pool is off limits until they are finished. Hope to have access back in April. Next the Dining hall will be getting a new roof. If we have to, we will pick up meals from Bibb County. We have had to do that before and it works out well. It is a good partnership. We are well cared for by the legislature. Our funds come directly from the legislature. This place is 22 plus acres and it takes a lot to keep it up. They do right by us.

COVID Changes- DPH guidelines, restrictions have improved as they have learned more. The 1st case we had here, the recommendations were for a full shut down. Now we know how to trace and quarantine only those most directly exposed. Even those have a very small chance of that they were exposed to the level of getting COVID. We hope that total school shut down are a thing of the past.

Today there is Sunshine and we are grateful for that. Things are looking up in this little region of the world.

Next Meeting: March 19th all are asked if it is okay to move it to 2pm. All agree.

Meeting is set for March 19th at 2 PM

Meeting adjourned

Today is: **NATIONAL PLANT A FLOWER DAY**

Spring is just around the corner, and Friday, March 12th is the day to participate in National Plant a Flower Day. Each year this day is dedicated to the planting of flowers and looking forward to the spring season. Flower gardening has become a hobby for many, young and old, and National Plant a Flower Day is a start to the new season each year. Marigolds and Daffodils are March flowers to plant. The daffodils pictured were bulbs planted by students at GAB years ago and continue to bloom in the Spring!



From the Greenhouse with Mr. Blackwell



March is typically the busiest month in the GAB greenhouse as we get ready for our April plant sale. Most days find students busy planting flower and vegetable seeds and transplanting rooted plants into larger pots. Pictured above is a flat of celosia seedlings (a vibrant colored flower that loves the summer heat) that need transplanting. The seeds are very tiny (about the size of black pepper) so the students just find it easiest to sprinkle the seeds over a flat in January and leave in the greenhouse for a month until the seedlings are large enough to transplant into 6 pack bedding flower containers. It's a very detailed task involving separating the tiny seedlings from each other to be moved into the 6 pack containers as a finished product for sale.



Our plan is to have plants for sale either the first week after we come back from spring break or the following week in April. We never exactly know because Mother Nature doesn't always share her plans with US!





Here the students are working on transplanting purple heart plants into 1-gallon containers.

This is a process that started back in the fall when the students collected stem cuttings from purple heart plants growing on campus. The students got the cuttings to root over the winter and now they are ready to be moved into larger containers for the plant sale. They take the 1-gallon pot and fill it halfway with soil and then they move two of the purple heart plants into the new container while adding some more soil. They then pack the plants down, add fertilizer and move the plants to the greenhouse for one more month of growing.



A Message from our School Counselor

I have attached the passive permission form for the student wellness survey. Parents please fill this form out **ONLY** if you **DO NOT** want your child to participate in taking the survey. Virtual students can have their parents email the form back to Octavian Burch at: octavian.burch@doe.k12.ga.us

Or send the form back with your student when they return to school next week . Please email to me no later than next Thursday March 18, 2021. The survey will be open until April 2, 2021.

GEORGIA STUDENT WELLNESS SURVEY (Grades 6-12) PASSIVE PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

The Student Wellness Survey is an anonymous, statewide survey instrument that was designed to collect data on student wellness during the current school year. The Student Wellness Survey contains 33 questions and covers various topics such as school climate and safety, bullying, alcohol and drug use and mental health. All student survey data is anonymous and self-reported.

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) gives you the right to opt your child out of participating in the survey. If you **do not** wish for your child to participate in the Student Wellness Survey, please sign and return this form to the school by _____. If you would like to examine the survey, please come by the school between _____ and _____, and we will be happy to provide you with a copy for your review.

DO NOT return this form if your child can participate in this survey.

Please sign this form and return it to school by _____
if you do not wish for your child to participate.

I would prefer that my child NOT participate in the Student Wellness Survey.

SCHOOL _____

STUDENT _____ GRADE _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

_____ Date

Thank you for your participation.

Throwing Clay on the Pottery Wheel



ECC students experienced the potter's wheel for their first chance last Friday in the Art room! They can hardly wait to fire, glaze them, and use them for a hot chocolate party. New skills are worth celebrating!



March

Birthdays

3/4 Zy

3/23 Harry

3/9 Kameron

3/28 B.J.

3/13 Jess

3/29 Sammy

3/14 Destiny B.

