Mark your Calendars

February 5th - Wear Red Day
February 14th - Valentine’s Day (Sunday)
February 15th - President’s Day, Monday Holiday
February 19th - School Council Meeting @1:00
3/29 through 4/5 - Spring Break Week with Easter Holiday

History of World Nutella Day is February 5th!

World Nutella Day was first celebrated in 2007. The idea for the day came from Sara Rosso who was an American blogger who was living in Italy at the time. What made her think to start World Nutella Day? Why her love of the product of course! The fans of Nutella embraced the day with gusto and took the joy of the day to social media around the world! 2015 saw the transfer of the Day from Sara to the company that makes Nutella, Ferrero. Making this transfer allowed for the day to become even larger and ensured its longevity. The company has done some pretty creative things to support World Nutella Day. There is a website (nutelladay.com) to keep current on all of the plans for the holiday. You can even sign up for a chance to become the Chief Nutella Ambassador!

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: JMcinter@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!
Dear GAB Families,

It is February and all is well at the Georgia Academy for the Blind! The school is fully open for onsite instruction and residential living. Again, thank you to our School Council for support that families have choice of virtual or onsite instruction until further notice. Over ¾ of our students have chosen to attend in-person. All are invited to join future School Council meetings which will be held the 3rd Friday of each month at 1:00 p.m. in-person or virtual. Notice will be sent of the next meeting which will be February 19, 2021.

Just for clarification, GAB is a State School governed by the Georgia Department of Education and operating under the State leadership of Richard Woods, Georgia’s School Superintendent and Dr. Kenney Moore, State Schools Director. Please know that all operational decisions at GAB are approved by State level leadership prior to being communicated publicly. You will find that local school districts have issues to address that do not affect State Schools and will therefore publish decisions accordingly. Please do reach out to me to discuss any matters that concern or interest you. We try to keep everyone in the know, but you may have a concern that needs to be addressed individually.

Included in this newsletter is the Department of Public Health protocol document for returning to work/school from diagnosed or suspected COVID-19 infection. If your child is exposed or diagnosed with this virus, please use this document as your guide, notify the school of your child’s absence or need for online instruction during quarantine or isolation, or contact Assistant Principal, Alicia Jackson, or me to help you know what to do. GAB follows all protocol to deter exposure to students and staff.

February is American Heart month, and this Friday is Wear Red Day. Please join us in recognizing this worthy occasion by wearing red. Also, we challenge you to do something extra that will make your happy: walk a few extra steps or pass on the fried and opt for baked! Please encourage your students to wear red and keep a happy heart!

We will enjoy a week of activity starting Tuesday, February 16th in honor of Kid’s Heart Challenge.

It all starts with the !

Always,
Cindy
Return to Child Care, School, or Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) Guidance After COVID-19 Illness or Exposure

January 22, 2021

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Education, has released guidance to help schools plan for a safe return to in-person instruction in fall 2020: https://www.georgiainsights.com/recovery.html. DPH recommends schools use this guidance to make decisions regarding opening for in-person education.


For childcare facilities, schools, and IHEs opting to have in-person instruction, the following guidance should be used to make decisions for students, teachers, and staff:

- with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19;
- who have suspected COVID-19 (e.g., developed symptoms of respiratory infection [e.g., cough, shortness of breath, fever] but did not get tested for COVID-19 and have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 or live in an area with local or widespread transmission;
- who have been exposed to COVID-19*

**Return to Childcare, School, or IHE Strategy**

DPH recommends a time-based return to childcare, school, or IHE strategy that is determined based on a person’s health status. Decisions about “return to childcare,” “return to school,” or “return to IHE” for persons with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 should be made in the context of local circumstances (community transmission, resource needs, etc.).

**COVID-19 Vaccine and Quarantine**

If you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, please visit https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine or call our COVID-19 vaccination hotline at (888) 357-0169.

Due to limited information on how well COVID-19 vaccines reduce the spread of virus and how long immunity to COVID-19 may last after vaccination, vaccinated persons should continue to follow all DPH guidance to protect themselves and others. This includes wearing a mask, social distancing, avoiding crowds, washing hands often, and following quarantine guidance after exposure to someone with COVID-19.
**Isolation of Cases**

**Symptomatic** persons with confirmed COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 can return to childcare, school, or IHE after:

- At least 10 days\(^7\) have passed since symptoms first appeared AND
- At least 24 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND
- Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved

**Asymptomatic** persons with confirmed COVID-19 can return to childcare, school, or IHE after at least 10 days\(^7\) have passed since the positive laboratory test, AND the person remains asymptomatic

- Note, asymptomatic persons who test positive and later develop symptoms should follow the guidance for symptomatic persons above.

**Quarantine of Contacts**

All close contacts in private and public schools, childcare facilities, and IHEs MUST be quarantined and excluded from the childcare/school setting and all extracurricular activities, regardless of students, teachers, or staff wearing masks or the use of physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass). Refer to the [Public Health Administrative Order](#). A 14-day quarantine period is still recommended; however, individuals may opt for a shorter quarantine period by meeting the below criteria. **NOTE:** The day of exposure is day 0.

Asymptomatic persons who have a known exposure to a person with COVID-19 can return to childcare, school, or IHE:

**After 7 full days have passed since their most recent exposure, if they fulfill all THREE of the following criteria:**

- Test\(^6\) for COVID-19 (PCR/molecular or antigen test) no earlier than day 5 of quarantine AND
- Receive a negative result AND
- Do not experience any COVID-19 symptoms\(^8\) during the quarantine period

**After 10 full days have passed since their most recent exposure, if they are not tested for COVID-19 AND do not experience any COVID-19 symptoms\(^8\) during the quarantine period:**

After stopping quarantine after day 7 or 10, individuals who do not have symptoms\(^8\) should:

- Closely monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days from their most recent date of exposure
- For at least the entire 14 days, they should strictly adhere to mitigation measures including appropriate mask usage, staying at least 6 feet from others except for brief transitional movements (e.g., changing classes), washing their hands, avoiding crowds, and taking other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19

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We protect lives.
If an individual, who is a close contact AND ended quarantine after day 7 or 10, develops symptoms they should be sent home immediately and follow the guidelines for symptomatic individuals and seek COVID-19 testing.

Additional quarantine guidance can be found at https://dph.georgia.gov/contact

Both CDC and DPH DO NOT recommend using a test-based strategy for children or adults returning to school or childcare (2 negative tests at least 24 hours apart) after COVID-19 infection. CDC has reported prolonged PCR positive test results without evidence of infectiousness. In one study, individuals were reported to have positive COVID-19 tests for up to 12 weeks post initial positive.

More information about the science behind the symptom-based discontinuation of isolation and return to school can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/strategy-discontinue-isolation.html

* Please find criteria for being a close contact at https://dph.georgia.gov/contact

† A limited number of persons with severe illness (those admitted to a hospital and needed oxygen) or persons with a weakened immune system (immunocompromised) due to a health condition or medication may produce replication-competent virus beyond 10 days that may warrant extending the duration of isolation for up to 20 days after symptom onset. Consider consultation with a medical provider and/or infection control experts for these patients.

‡ The test must be a PCR/molecular or antigen test performed no earlier than day 5 of quarantine. If an individual is tested earlier than day 5, they must be retested on day 5 or later or follow the 10-day guidance.

§ If the individual experiences ONE of the following COVID-19 symptoms (fever, chills, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new cough, or new loss of taste or smell) OR two of the following symptoms (sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, chills, muscle pain, extreme fatigue/feeling very tired, new severe/very bad headache, new nasal congestion/stuffy or runny nose) they must follow the guidance for symptomatic individuals.

Ⅲ Completing a test-based strategy is contingent upon the availability of ample testing supplies, laboratory capacity, and convenient access to testing and requires two samples taken at least 24 hours apart. If a facility requires the test-based strategy for return (which is discouraged by DPH), this should be done by a private physician through a commercial lab. The test-based strategy is not fulfilled by a single test, nor should it be used for screening of all persons returning to school or childcare.
Here are some photos of Dillon’s work during the COVID break. Mom helped him construct a chart about magnets (photo below). She also guided him as they cooked noodles to demonstrate his understanding of the letter N. Mrs. Creech, Dillon’s teacher, was so proud of the work he did at home during virtual learning!
This week on Tuesday, February 2nd, we celebrated Groundhog Day! And you will be pleased to know that Punxsutawney Corona Phil did not see his shadow so we will NOT have 6 more weeks of quarantine! In Groundhog-ese, Corona Phil gave his prediction scroll that reads:

It is a beautiful morning this I can see,
   With all my faves viewing virtually.
With my faithful followers being safe and secure, Our tradition of groundhog must endure. We all have passed through the darkness of night,
   But now see hope of morning’s bright light.

Happy Groundhog Day

At GAB our staff wears all kinds of hats to serve our students! Pictured on the left is Mr. Forrester, our Systems Analyst. He is reading to Mrs. Creech 8th grade guys. Having a familiar adult share stories reinforces the idea that reading is important for everyone!
2021 Annual Parent Involvement Survey for Georgia Families
Raising a Student with a Disability
Georgia Department of Education, (GaDOE)
Division for Special Education
In Partnership With
Parent to Parent of Georgia (P2P)

Please complete the online survey to make your voice heard.

Why are you being asked to complete a Statewide Survey?
In order for all students to graduate prepared to achieve a lifetime of success, families need to be an important part of the school team. It is critical that the GaDOE assist local school systems in partnering with families to raise the achievement rate for students with disabilities. Completing this survey will assist in achieving this goal.

Who is being surveyed?
The GaDOE is surveying parents of students with disabilities throughout Georgia.

What will be done with the information collected?
GaDOE Division of Special Education will work collaboratively with Parent to Parent of Georgia (P2P), the statewide Parent Training Information Center, to identify needs in family involvement within the state and local districts based on statewide survey results.

Who will see your answers?
Individual answers are kept confidential. Each response will be coded by a number – not a name.

How do you complete the survey?
You may complete the survey online in English and Spanish at https://survey.gadoe.org/SPEDParentSurvey
or www.p2pga.org or www.parentmentors.org.

Why do you want to know my child’s ethnicity & disability?
Geographic area, ethnicity, and disability group data are collected to ensure the results are valid and reflect the overall demographics of the state. Be sure to indicate ethnicity as requested.

Who do you contact for help with completing the survey?
Special Education Help Desk at 404-657-9968
You may also call your local school system’s Parent Mentor.
To find out if your system has a Parent Mentor on staff, go to www.parentmentors.org
Find Your Freedom!

Bike Day

Everyone is welcome to try a Freedom Concepts Adaptive Bike!
Join our trained professionals who will be on hand to conduct product sizing and evaluations for children and youth ages 3 and up.

Wellspring Wellness Center
1101 Dunbar Road
Warner Robins, GA

Thursday, Feb. 11th, 2021
Time: 2:00pm - 6:00pm

Please RSVP to:
Beth Bryan, PT, DPT
478-785-1024

Log on to social media and share pictures of your Bike Day experience!

www.freedomconcepts.com
Middle GA Parent Mentor Partnership Presents

GUARDIANSHIP
AND YOUR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18 - 1:00PM

Do you have questions about when your special needs child turns 18?

Join us for this FREE webinar where Attorney Jim McCarten will answer important questions regarding guardianship:

- What is guardianship and why is it needed?
- Cost? Is there a way to get help with the cost?
- Where do you begin the process?

Register by scanning the UPC Code, or following the link here: https://forms.gle/ZwhFDu8wPPy9whjd9

Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership
February Birthdays

2/2 Ryder 2/18 Ambria
2/3 Elisha 2/22 Roni
2/6 Brian 2/24 Dorrian
2/11 Aschmid 2/24 Kayla