

# Georgia Cyber Academy

## Special Education Frequently Asked Questions and Contact Information

### **Overview of Special Education**

We have never had an IEP, but I think my student needs Special Education. What do I do?

If you feel that your child is struggling academically, emotionally, behaviorally or socially, the appropriate first step is to discuss your concern(s) with your Homeroom teacher. GCA follows the Student Support Team (SST) and Response to Intervention (RTI) models for providing a struggling student the appropriate interventions. If your child has been referred to SST/RTI team at his/her previous school, been evaluated by a school or licensed psychologist privately, or been diagnosed with a significant health impairment by a physician or licensed psychologist, it is important to share that information with your Homeroom teacher as well.

Your Homeroom teacher will make the referral to the SST/RTI team and a meeting will be scheduled to determine the appropriate next steps in the process.

Many students who have struggled in brick and mortar schools find that GCA's instructional model provides a unique learning environment in which they can excel.

We had an IEP in our previous school, and we realize now we need it at GCA. How do we get it?

Discuss your situation with your Homeroom teacher and send copies of any Special Education eligibility information or your student's most recent IEP to your Homeroom teacher. The homeroom teacher will pass that paperwork to the Special Education Team to determine the appropriate next steps.

My student has an IEP, what does this mean regarding his homeroom teacher and classes?

Each student's placement and services is individualized and are provided along the continuum of services in the least restrictive environment possible. Students served by Special Education in an Inclusion setting will be assigned co-homeroom team comprised of a General Education Teacher and Special Education Teacher. Students requiring more intensive support may be assigned to one Special Education teacher as their homeroom teacher and Case Manager for the year. In all cases, the IEP Team determines the appropriate service model for the student.

What kinds of services does GCA offer a student with disabilities?

GCA provides both direct and related services for students with disabilities that require specialized instruction. Those services are comparable to the services provided by a brick and mortar school. GCA utilizes both virtual and face to face service models as appropriate to the student's needs as determined by the IEP team.

### **Students served in Special Education at GCA**

Does my student with an IEP have to complete work in Study Island, the Online School (OLS), or other curricula on his actual grade level, or can we work on a lower grade level? What if the

lessons take my student longer to complete? Are all the requirements of the school the same for my student with an IEP?

It is important that each student is exposed to his/her grade level standards. GCA utilizes curricular materials such as Study Island, the OLS, as well as other instructional materials to meet student's individual needs and ensure instruction is made available on grade level. GCA students will be required to complete the work assigned to him/her as determined by the IEP Team. Any need for modifications or accommodations will be addressed by the IEP team.

High School students are required to earn the required number of Carnegie units for graduation and to do so requires demonstration of proficiency on the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) for each course. Students served by Special Education are provided specialized instruction and accommodations designed to enable achievement of those standards.

Are Class Connect sessions and other classes/ conferences/ meetings set by the teacher required?

Any specialized service that is determined by the IEP Team as necessary for your student's success is a requirement. In addition, conferences and certain meetings require attendance by the Parent and/or Learning Coach in order to ensure the support that your student needs to be successful at GCA.

What happens if we don't go to class/ meetings set as required?

Your homeroom teacher will contact you to encourage class/meeting attendance. If class attendance becomes a chronic issue, or impacts achievement of GCA academic progress expectations (OLS/Study Island progress, etc.), then the IEP team will meet to determine the appropriate intervention. Students who are chronically absent can be referred to the Family Academic Support Team as appropriate. Please refer to the 2013-2014 GCA District Handbook for an explanation of that process.

Who is responsible for my student's learning?

GCA, as a charter school, provides a visionary experience in the education of children through a robust partnership between the parent(s) and the school. It is GCA's belief and expectation that parents take an active role in their child's education as their role of Learning Coach for grades K-8, and Mentor in High School. This collaborative partnership extends through the IEP team's responsibility for educating students with disabilities. The 2013-2014 GCA District Handbook provides an explanation of those expectations and a School-Parent-Student Compact for achieving those expectations.

### **State and District Testing for Students with IEPs**

Does my student have to take the CRCT and other State-mandated tests even though he has an IEP?

Yes. All students in public schools (including charter schools such as GCA) are required to participate in the state assessment program. The IEP team is responsible for ensuring that your child participates in the appropriate assessment program with the necessary accommodations based on his/her individual needs. GCA students

participate in all of the state assessment programs (GKIDS, CRCT, CRCT-M, GAA, EOCT, Writing Assessments, and GHSGT).

### What happens if my student does not pass the test?

Students in grades 3, 5, and 8 who do not meet the State standard on the Reading (3, 5, 8) or Math (5, 8) portions of the CRCT are required to take the test again following remediation. If a student does not pass the retest, s/he is retained until the IEP Team meets prior to school resuming in the Fall to determine whether promotion or retention is the best outcome for the child.

EOCT tests are taken one time, and students do not retake it if they do not pass. The score is representative of his/her mastery of the standards taught in the course, and the score will still count as 20% of the student's final grade for that course.

Elementary and Middle Grades Writing Assessments do not require a retake.

High School Graduation and Writing Tests do allow for retake opportunities as passing those are a graduation requirement. Retest opportunities are afforded until the student passes the test or obtains an equivalency diploma by other means.

### Should I provide accommodations for my student on his Scantron and other assessments?

Discuss the need with your Special Education Case Manager. Typically, students are encouraged to complete the Scantron without accommodations in order to obtain an accurate measurement of knowledge and growth. However, if accommodations are used, it is important to be consistent throughout the year so that the assessment results are comparable.

## High School and Transition

### Can my student graduate from High School with an IEP?

Yes. Georgia High School graduation opportunities are the same for all students, whether or not they have an IEP.

### Will colleges deny admission for my student because of his IEP?

No. Colleges cannot differentiate between the transcript of a student who had Special Education supports throughout high school and one who did not. However, if your student needs accommodations in college, s/he will have to provide documentation of his/her disability and request support through the Office for Students with Disabilities (The name may vary from institution to institution). **Related Services and Evaluations**

### My student has therapy (Ex: Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, etc) as a service on his IEP. How does that work at GCA?

Decisions are made based on the individual student and his needs. Some therapy services are able to be provided online, while others require face to face appointments. If your student requires face to face service, appointments with a contracted provider near your home will be arranged. It is the student/family responsibility to attend the face to face sessions as a required service documented on your student's IEP.

My student has been referred for therapy, but we have not gotten an update recently. How do I find out when we will get his first appointment?

Contact your student's Special Education Caseload Manager.

The therapy session scheduled interferes with a class connect. What do I do?

The initial therapy schedule is set by our Related Services Coordinators. You are encouraged to keep that initial appointment time if at all possible. After the initial appointment, you can work with the provider's office to arrange therapy appointments at a more convenient time for your student's schedule.

My student was evaluated (by a Therapist or Psychologist); now what?

Your student's Special Education Case Manager will coordinate a meeting with you and the other relevant IEP Team members (GCA School Psychologist and/or Speech Language Pathologist are often included) in order to review the results of the evaluation and update your student's IEP with the information obtained by the evaluation. You will receive a copy of the evaluation results and any updated Special Education documentation.

**If you have additional questions, please contact one of your student's homeroom teachers. The General Education teacher is the most appropriate contact for general GCA questions relevant to the school as a whole. The Special Education Teacher (IEP Case Manager) is the most appropriate contact for any questions related specifically to Special Education.**

**Parents may also attend the Special Programs Open Office. Please check the GCA events calendar at [www.gacyber.org](http://www.gacyber.org) for times and login links for the Open Office.**