



STUDENT SUCCESS C.A.F.E.  
SESSION WRAP UP



DECATUR COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT C.A.F.E. WRAP UP: May 2016

Conference Call with Committee Leaders and GaDOE C.A.F.E. Consultant

April 21, 2016

4th Full Working C.A.F.E Session

April 28, 2016

**“Read...Dream...Achieve”**

Next C.A.F.E Session is July 26, 2016  
4 pm to 6 pm at Jones-Wheat Elementary School

**Pre-work to April C.A.F.E. Stakeholder Session #5**

C.A.F.E. Leaders on Conference Planning Call on April 21:

Committee Leaders: Ronnie Burke, Decatur County Family Connection; Dr. Thea Gordon, Jones Wheat Elementary Counselor and community mentor; Catherine Gossett, District Special Education Director; Cheryl Guy, District Parent Involvement Coordinator; Kathy Varner, Title I, Federal Programs, District Director; and Sylena Wiggins, District Special Education Assistant Director

Highlights:

In February, the C.A.F.E. established three working stakeholder committees with designated leaders, time lines and short-term goals. During the conference call, the leaders discussed committee progress and made plans for the upcoming stakeholder meeting. Mrs. Gossett also discussed recent district work to find the root causes behind the decline in some fifth graders' reading levels. She reported new plans are underway to target 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades with reading interventions.

Committee Pre-Reports:

Outreach: Thea Gordon

The committee developed a questionnaire for designated high schools students based on individual interests such as entertainment and hobbies. The questionnaire will seek student input in various areas such: where they need help; what motivates them; and career goals. The information will be used to match students with adult mentors. The team discussed using mentors during 5<sup>th</sup> block, which is at the end of the school day. The mentors must go through the district volunteer training which includes a police background check.

Literacy: Ronnie Burke

The committee is working with Southwest Regional Library, Decatur Branch, on summer reading activities, including contests, to take place at the library and around the community. The C.A.F.E. committee also is working to identify qualified volunteers to read to young children at several of the free school breakfast and lunch summer programs delivered throughout the county.



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### The Campaign: Kathy Varner

The committee is working on promotional ideas such as creating banners and also other items (if the budget allows) such as staff T-shirts. The committee wants the C.A.F.E.'s work to be part of new web site being developed by the business community to promote the City of Bainbridge.

The committees plan to apply for funding from the Decatur County Schools Foundation and to ask the high school art classes for assistance.

### Communication/Follow up to the Community Conversation:

C.A.F.E. committee leaders also suggested using use social media, such as the district's Instagram account, to publicize C.A.F.E. progress between sessions instead of sending direct emails. Local family, community and school members also can follow the C.A.F.E.'s progress through the C.A.F.E. Wrap Ups which are posted on the district website.

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## **Wrap Up - 4<sup>th</sup> Full C.A.F.E Session April 28, 2016**

A C.A.F.E. is a cross-sector collaborative team of family, school and community members with the common agenda to work together as a team to increase the post-secondary success of *all* students, particularly those with disabilities and/or at risk to not graduate, by working to intersect student success initiatives and supports.

### Present at April 28 C.A.F.E. Session:

1. Porche Chavers, Hutto Middle School Teacher
2. Alesia Brinson, Community Volunteer, Middle School Mentoring Program
3. Gina Burke, Bainbridge High School Lead Teacher
4. Ronnie Burke, Coordinator, Decatur County Family Connection, Region 10
5. Thea Gordon, Counselor Jones-Wheat Elementary School Counselor
6. Catherine Gossett, District Special Education Director
7. Cheryl Guy, District Parent Involvement Coordinator
8. Joe Kelley, Bainbridge High School Math Teacher, City of Climax Councilman
9. Debbie McIntyre, Adult Education, Bainbridge State College
10. Ale Moreno, Parent/Community Member, family advisor on ESL issues
11. Joseph Randall, Parent, Div. for Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities, Region 4
12. Kayce Shiley, Youth Services, SW Georgia Regional Library, Decatur Branch
13. Lanika Thomas, GA Vocational Rehabilitation, Counselor
14. Kathy Varner, Title I, Federal Programs Director, Decatur County School District
15. Elizabeth Whaley, Parent and Facilitator for "Darkness to Light," *a preventative advocacy training to keep children safe from sexual abuse*
16. John Wooden, Bainbridge Middle School Principal, Minister at St Paul's Missionary Baptist Church, Bainbridge
17. Sylena Wiggins, District Special Education Assistant Director



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### New Members!

18. Dianna Cross, Hutto Middle School Fifth Grade Special Education Teacher (Hutto MS Teacher of the Year and Decatur County School District Teacher of the Year and a member of the State Advisory Parent for Special Education to the Georgia Board of Education)
19. Officer Kenneth Ellison, Bainbridge Public Safety, representing the mentoring program, "Kids 'n Kops." <http://kidsandkops.com>

### C.A.F.E. Members Unable to Attend the April 28 C.A.F.E. Session

Jimmy Adamson, Local Minister and Community Activist; Dennis Brinson, Decatur County Commissioner; Kevin Bruton, Parent and local Business Owner; Kimberly Coleman Jones, Ga Department of Labor; Michael Cox, Sheriff Deputy; Tommy Howell, Cairo High School Principal; Tom Griffin, Bank Representative, Graduate of Decatur Schools; Andrew Diaz, GAP Counselor; Fred Rayfield, School District Superintendent; Catherine Vanstone, Technology, Training & Development, SW Reg. Library

Transition Work Guests: Sondra Hudson, GVR District Consultant for Georgia's Careers Pathway Grant and Sherise Dennard, Decatur's assigned VR business liaison who will work with local businesses to improve opportunities for students.

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### Opening:

The meeting opened with positive news about additional mental health supports for middle school students and an additional teacher training opportunity this summer. In addition, two Decatur School District students, both receiving special education services, recently received top awards for academic success, and one also received a college scholarship for sports. In addition an initiative, High School High Tech, started through the SSIP with the support of VR, is engaging 10 students in career building activities including a college campus and soft skills training.

### SSIP Update:

As a part of a school district's work under the SSIP, Mrs. Gossett and Mrs. Wiggins reviewed progress made with the 50 students who are targeted under the State Systematic Improvement Plan. (The C.A.F.E. serves as the Student Success Stakeholder team to assist in the improvement plan to increase the graduation rate for students with disabilities.)

### Update from GAVR representatives on a new federal grant that Decatur is a recipient Georgia Career Pathways to work: "Engage, Explore, Employ"

Georgia is one of five states chosen by the US Department of Education to each receive a five-year grant of \$4.7 million, called the E3, to improve career options for students with disabilities. *The drop out rate is two times higher for students receiving special education services than that of students without a disability.*

Decatur County School District was chosen as one of five sites in the state to kick off the transition initiative. The district will be assigned a designated transition counselor and a business liaison who will work with local business on hiring students and creating transition activities such as apprenticeships and job shadowing. The grant will include students - in and out of school - as young as middle school and up to 24 years old. The Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University will do the grant assessment and data collection.



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### Committee Reports to the Full C.A.F.E

The Campaign (to Increase Student Graduation Rates and Outcomes by Improving Reading)  
Leader: Kathy Varner Members: Gena Burke, Catherine Gossett, Cheryl Guy and Joe Kelley  
Slogan: **Read. Dream. Achieve.**

The committee is looking at ways to energize the community to look at the big picture of graduation, careers, secondary outcomes and the critical need for improved grade level reading. The committee is working on developing a tag line for the campaign slogan that will relay the message that every child will leave high school with an effective transition plan.

In addition, the committee discussed running a contest with high school students to develop their campaign's brand with an art logo or symbol.

They also plan to promote the campaign at the district Invocation at the start of the school year where almost all employees will be present. It was pointed out that Decatur School District is the largest employer in the area. The committee also is going to seek financial or in kind support from the Convention and Visitor's Bureau and local businesses and organizations.

### Literacy:

Leaders: Debbie McIntyre and Ronnie Burke

Members: Ale Moreno, Deanna Cross, Sylena Wiggins, Jimmy Adamson; Michael Cox, Kaycee Shiley; Porche Chavers and Catherine Vanstone

Mr. Burke announced the local Family Connection donated \$500 to the library for summer reading incentives. The committee is working on sending volunteers to read to some of the pre-k summer programs. They are working on funding to give each young student a book to take home. It was suggested they also contact Friendship House to see if volunteer readers could be sent to the highly successful afterschool and summer program. The committee also plans to ask local fireman to read to the preschoolers.

The district will be promoting the summer library reading programs before school is out for the year. The committee also is looking to partner with the state initiative, "Get Georgia Reading." Decatur's web sites are promoting the more than 10,400 free books available to computer and mobile devices that can be accessed 24 hours a day — every day — through Aug. 31. Last year, kids read over 100,000 books. Student can log on by going to: <http://www.getgeorgiareading.org/myon2016>

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### Outreach: Leaders: Thao Gordon and Alesia Brinson

Joseph Randal, Tommie Howell, Kenneth E.XXXX, Kimberly Coleman Jones, Lanika Thomas, Elizabeth Whaley, Porche Chavers, Kevin Bruton, John Wooden, and Andrew Diaz

The committee plans to send out the questionnaire to ten students identified by the SSIP team and use the information to match adult mentors, who will receive a background check and training from the district. The committee decided it did not want to wait for the school year to begin to start the mentoring program. They are working with the District to identify



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the students and at the same time identifying adult mentors. Ms., Guy said she could add an additional district volunteer training session for the adult summer mentors. In the meantime, the mentor and students are invited to attend the Kids'n Kops Bainbridge Public Safety summer activities, according to Office Ellison. The committee also will plan for expanding the effort in August at the start of the school year.

### Important to note:

- ✓ The C.A.F.E. agreed all members should be trained as a district volunteer, who includes a back, ground check.
- ✓ The three committees plan to continue work through the summer and will meet back as a C.A.F.E. team on July 26 at 4 p.m. Leaders committed to send important updates to the GaDOE facilitator, Patti Solomon, [psolomon2@gmail.com](mailto:psolomon2@gmail.com)

### Rewind:

To review past action, please refer to the first three C.A.F.E. Wrap Up meeting reports and one Community Conversation Wrap Up, *available* on the Decatur County School District website: [www/boe.dcboe.com](http://www/boe.dcboe.com)

*C.A.F.E. Organizational Process: is based on best practices developed by school-based stakeholder teams in Georgia that implemented the C.A.F.E. process over the last seven years. National guidance for the process of running these stakeholder teams comes from 15 years of collective work of special and general educators, representing every state, many national health and education organizations, and families.*

*These participants created a blueprint to assist in the facilitation of stakeholder teams called "Leading by Convening." This work is led by the IDEA Partnership, which is a national organization supported by OSEP and the National State Directors of Special Education. "Leading by Convening. A Blueprint For Authentic Engagement." It is available on line at: <http://www.ideapartnership.org/building-connections/the-partnershipway>*

### Facilitation:

Facilitator Patti Solomon, prepared this wrap up with the assistance of Anne Ladd, GaDOE Family Engagement Specialists, and is the C.A.F.E. facilitator under the State Personnel Development Grant, Division for Special Education Services and Supports, GaDOE. Questions or corrections to this report please email Ms. Solomon, [psolomon2@gmail.com](mailto:psolomon2@gmail.com)