



6201 Powers Ferry Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30339



www.fultonschools.org

News Release

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For More Information Contact

Anne Boatwright, Sheryl Gripper or Susan Romanick, APR, Communications
470-254-6830 or communications@fultonschools.org

Fulton schools celebrate Exceptional Children's Week with activities and awards ceremonies

March 4-8 was Exceptional Children's Week across Georgia, and Fulton County Schools joined in with celebrations around the county.

"Exceptional Children's Week is a time when we all come together to acknowledge and celebrate our exceptional students," said Sherry Peterson, director of the schools system's Services for Exceptional Children (SEC) department. "It was truly heartwarming to see so many of our schools take the time to honor their students with awards ceremonies and performances."

"We provided activities and themes for the week," added Anquanette Herndon, SEC program instructional support teacher (IST). The SEC Department provides support to students with exceptionalities that impact their academic and cognitive performance and social/emotional health and behavior.

Many schools held "Yes I Can!" awards ceremonies to celebrate the talents of their exceptional scholars and to highlight other instructional activities. One school, Evoline C. West Elementary School, held its celebration last week with the theme "We are Daring to be Different."

"Our students received Math Fact Master and Sight Word Superstar awards. I'm so proud of the growth they are making on a daily basis," said Jennifer Burton, Evoline C. West's principal.

On March 25, Riverwood International Charter School will hold the district-wide "Yes I Can!" awards ceremony, sponsored by the Fulton Education Foundation, at 7 p.m. in the school's auditorium. Prior to the event at 6 p.m., families can visit a resource fair to explore options for recreation, transition, post-secondary opportunities, parent and family support and employment.

Other schools used the arts to spotlight their students. Lake Windward Elementary School hosted a musical performance and art show in honor of Exceptional Children's Week. Titled "Wally Goes to the Movies" in honor of the school's alligator mascot, students present movie themed songs and art activities.

Incredible, dedicated teachers are what helps the district's exceptional students make progress and be successful. For example, at Parklane Elementary School, Kelli Covington is called "a rock star" by her colleagues and students' parents. Every day, she aims to help her students achieve their highest potential and says she has "an amazing job."

One of her strategies as an instructional support teacher is to focus on ensuring each student has an equal opportunity to access high quality education in the least restrictive environment. As her students navigate the general education classroom, she can “push in” as needed, or insert herself into small group instructional sessions, to provide supplemental support.

Of special importance to her are the support systems created for teachers to grow professionally and personally. “There is always someone available for an instructional support teacher to reach out to with questions or concerns,” Covington said.

Working collaboratively creates partnerships with the school’s administration, faculty, and parents of the exceptional scholars. This way, she can make sure each student’s specific needs are addressed.

One thing Covington particularly loves is helping parents navigate the complex and stressful waters of special education. Her expertise enables her to explain educational rights, present levels of performance, evaluation results, service options and explain misconceptions in parent-friendly terms.

Principal Marissa Wilson sings her praises. “Parklane is extremely fortunate to have Kelli,” she said. “She has an unequivocal passion for her work. Her commitment extends far beyond servicing exceptional students and ensures that every student receives the best education possible. Her genuine love for children is evident in all that she does.”

The Georgia Council for Exceptional Children initiated Exceptional Children Week to educate the public about children with exceptionalities and garner support for special education. Since its inception, the week has served to spotlight the capabilities of children and youth with exceptionalities and the programs that support them in their communities.

Photos attached:

- “Yes I Can!” awards ceremony at Evoline C. West Elementary School
- “Wally Goes to the Movies” program at Lake Windward Elementary School

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About the Fulton County School System. The Fulton County School System is the fourth largest school system in Georgia. More than 95,000 students attend 106 schools in the cities of Alpharetta, Chattahoochee Hills, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Johns Creek, Milton, Mountain Park, Palmetto, Roswell, Sandy Springs, South Fulton and Union City.