

January 14, 2022

From Matt Arthur: Supports For Those Who Prepare and Employ Educators

I hope your new year is off to a great start! January 1, 2022, marks the beginning of my third year with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), and I thank you for your valuable and ongoing collaboration with our agency and our staff. We appreciate you partnering with us to help shape our policies and practices and to explore with us ways to continue improving our work to ensure each child in Georgia has an effective education.

January 1st also marks the addition of our new Division Director of Educator Ethics, Laurin Vonada, to our staff. Laurin comes to us from the office of Governor Brian P. Kemp, where she most recently served as Associate Executive Counsel assisting on a wide array of legal issues pertaining to P-12 education and state agencies. We are very glad to welcome Laurin to the GaPSC and to her new role. You can learn more about Laurin in this issue.

Providing professional learning and technical assistance is an important part of GaPSC's commitment to support an effective educator workforce. The purpose of this communication is to ensure you are aware of some of our more recent support initiatives and resources, which we hope you find helpful in working with your colleagues, candidates, and educators.

Support structures highlighted in this communication include:

- Links to the 21 concurrent sessions offered in GaPSC's 2021 Certification and Program Officials Conference. This was our 27th year of offering this opportunity for school district, EPP, RESA personnel, and others to explore critical topics relevant to certification, educator preparation, ethics, assessment, and educational leadership;
- Links to suggested guidelines for appropriate use of social media and ethical considerations in remote learning environments for educators, aimed at helping them avoid ethical missteps;
- Links to our webcast series, which offers a broad menu of topics to help prospective and practicing educators navigate our policies and processes and enhance awareness of services;
- Information about the newly developed GaPSC Paraprofessional Ethics Modules aimed at ensuring paraprofessionals know, understand, and can apply Georgia's Code of Ethics for Educators to real-world situations. We are proud of the collaboration with each of Georgia's 16 RESAs on this greatly needed initiative; and
- How to get assistance where needed.

We wish you a very happy and safe 2022. Please let us know how we can assist you.

Matt Arthur
Executive Secretary

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Introducing GaPSC Ethics Division Director Laurin Vonada

GaPSC welcomes Laurin Vonada as GaPSC's Director of the Educator Ethics Division. A former educator and current member of the Georgia Bar Association, Laurin most recently served as Associate Executive Counsel in the Office of Governor Brian P. Kemp where she assisted on a wide array of legal issues pertaining to P-12 education and state agencies. She oversaw the Governor's role in the rulemaking process, served briefly as the Open Records Officer, and authored education legislation for the Governor's administration. For three years prior to serving in the Governor's Office, Laurin was employed by the Georgia Senate Research Office as a Senior Policy Analyst with a focus on state policy that affected P-12 and higher education, as well as the multiple state retirement systems. Laurin was a pre-kindergarten teacher before deciding to pursue law school.

"I am thrilled to join GaPSC as the Ethics Division Director. I will work alongside the Commission, as well as school districts, program providers, RESAs, and other stakeholders, to provide the students of Georgia with the safest environment to learn, grow, and become the best versions of themselves. I look forward to drawing on my experience in both the legal and education professions to advance this goal and further the work of the Commission," shared Laurin.

Welcome Laurin!

2021 Certification and Program Officials Conference Materials

Held in October 2021, GaPSC's 27th Annual Certification and Program Officials Conference offered 21 concurrent sessions, delivered by over 55 presenters, on current topics related to certification, educator preparation, ethics, assessment, and educational leadership. Matt Arthur, GaPSC's Executive Secretary, delivered the keynote address.

Sample sessions included:

- Levels and Leaders: Applying Advanced Degrees to Existing Certification
- The HBCU Experience: History Meets Innovation in Teacher Preparation
- Georgia's Approach for Developing an Ethical School Culture
- Program Admission Assessment (PAA): Early Identification and Strategies for Success
- Embracing Flexibility and Innovation in Teacher Preparation (Covid-19 and Beyond)
- Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQ) Responses: When "No" is NOT an Option
- Certification Hot Topics
- Partnering Leadership Preparation and Teacher Preparation Programs to Deliver Authentic and Reflective Virtual Classroom Observations During Challenging Times

The target audience for this annual convening includes school district, EPP, and RESA personnel, as well as others whose work intersects the work of the GaPSC and/or those with interest in the diverse topics offered.

A list of each session and session materials are available at https://www.gapsc.com/EducatorPreparation/Conference_Presentations.aspx.

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Ethical Guidelines for Social Media and Remote Learning

Social media and remote learning environments provide rich opportunities for communication, learning, and instructional innovation, yet come with ethical risks for educators in working with students, parents, and colleagues. To help address these risks, GaPSC offers suggested guidelines to proactively guide educators' professional decision-making for appropriate, ethical use of social media and in remote learning environments.

While these guidelines are not meant to be inclusive of all considerations, they do offer guidance school districts and EPPs may find helpful in working with pre-service candidates and practicing educators.

The guidance document is divided into three segments:

- Considerations for General Online Behavior
- Considerations for Ethical Use of Social Media
- Considerations for Ethical Remote Learning

The *Suggested Guidelines for Ethical Use of Social Media and Ethical Remote Learning*, are available at https://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/Downloads/GaPSC_Social%20Media%20and%20Remote%20LearningGuidelines_12-20-21.pdf.

Webcast Series

Available from the home page of [GaPSC's website](#) is a broad menu of 28 separate webcasts where prospective educators, practicing educators, school districts and schools, EPPs, educational organizations, and others can learn more about the work of the agency. Included are brief webcasts addressing each major area of work—certification, educator preparation, ethics, and assessment—as well as webcasts designed to address the needs of specific audiences, such as prospective teachers and educators seeking opportunities to advance within the profession.

The series is divided into four segments, with each segment consisting of multiple webcasts as follows:

- Agency Introduction
 - [About GaPSC](#)
 - [Certification](#)
 - [Educator Preparation](#)
 - [Ethics](#)
 - [Assessment](#)
 - [The Rulemaking Process](#)
- Prospective Educator Candidates
 - Prospective Teachers
 - [The Art of Teaching](#)
 - How To Begin:
 - [Already Hold a Four Year Degree?](#)
 - [Entering a College or University?](#)
 - [Moving from Paraprofessional to Teaching?](#)

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GaPSC's Webcast Series (continued)

- [Prospective Educational Leaders](#)
 - [Prospective Teacher Leaders](#)
 - [Prospective Service Field Educators](#)
- Foundations
 - [Assessment Overview](#)
 - Ethics
 - [What is the Investigative Process?](#)
 - About the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators:
 - [Standard 1: Legal Compliance](#)
 - [Standard 2: Conduct with Students](#)
 - [Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs](#)
 - [Standard 4: Honesty](#)
 - [Standard 5: Public Funds and Property](#)
 - [Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct](#)
 - [Standard 7: Confidential Information](#)
 - [Standard 8: Required Reports](#)
 - [Standard 9: Professional Conduct](#)
 - [Standard 10: Testing](#)
 - [Establishing an Ethical School Culture](#)
- Practicing Educators
 - [Certification Upgrades](#)
 - [Endorsements](#)

The GaPSC complete webcast series, including a description of each webcast, is available at <https://www.gapsc.com/WebcastSeries/home.aspx>.

Coming Soon: Paraprofessional Ethics Modules

Paraprofessionals are wonderful assets to education and serve important roles toward effective education. To ensure these educators know, understand, and can apply Georgia's Code of Ethics for Educators to their daily practice, paraprofessional ethics modules were developed by Georgia's RESAs in collaboration with GaPSC. The modules will be available through each RESA. Part of our proactive approach to ethics education, outreach, and prevention, these instructional learning tools are aimed at preventing missteps that address each of the ten Code of Ethics standards. Best practices, examples of violations, discussion questions, and scenarios, many of which are based on Georgia ethics cases, are included.

The enhanced learning gained by paraprofessionals who participate in the training provided within the modules will help protect them, their colleagues, their schools, their school districts, their community, and, most importantly, their students, by enhancing professionalism and school safety.

Each RESA will work with their individual school districts regarding availability and implementation of the paraprofessional ethics modules.

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Additional Assistance

The [GaPSC website](#) provides helpful, detailed information. If you don't find the answers you need on the website, the following contact information may be helpful:

- [Certification](#): Please use the online contact form [here](#).
- [Educator Preparation](#): EPPs are asked to contact their education specialist.
- [Ethics](#): Contact information is provided [here](#).
- [Assessment](#): Contact information is provided [here](#).