

## GSCA Region 3 Spring Meeting



### GSCA Region 3 Spring Meeting

University of Georgia Gwinnett Campus  
2530 Sever Rd.  
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

Friday, March 20, 2026

8:30am-2:30pm

Free Parking

Non-members can attend for free

Registration deadline Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>

Room Capacity: 50-75

## GSCA Region 3 Spring Meeting

### Speakers

#### **Kennard Weaver** *Atlanta Technical College*

“Little Learners, Big Futures: How K–12 Counselors Build Postsecondary Pathways from Day One” From Curiosity to Career: Designing Strategic Counseling Moves That Grow With Students

Postsecondary readiness does not begin in high school; it starts the moment a child begins to dream. This dynamic, grade-spanning session will equip counselors from kindergarten through 12th grade with a strategic, developmental roadmap for helping students identify their strengths, explore possibilities, and connect learning to life-long purpose. This session reframes counseling as a K–12 continuum of strategic moves, not a high school intervention. Through practical examples and innovative tools, participants will discover how to cultivate early curiosity, guide middle-grade exploration, and activate high school opportunities. Participants will learn how nontraditional pathways can inspire students as early as kindergarten and remain meaningful options through graduation.

A K–12 counseling framework for early postsecondary identity-building Tools to help children dream, plan, and design their futures Strategies for integrating DAP/CPH conversations across grade levels A playbook for helping students develop “next moves” at every developmental stage Real-world examples of how innovative models change lives and communities

#### **Natale Grubbs** *Georgia State University* Helping Students Gain RESPONDability

**Session Overview** This session introduces practical, research-informed strategies school counselors can use to help students recognize that, even in moments of stress or adversity, they have agency in how they respond. The purpose is to equip counselors with tools that build emotional awareness, increase self-regulation, and strengthen problem-solving skills, ultimately empowering students to navigate challenges with confidence and resilience. Key points include Mindfulness practices that help students pause, notice their internal experience, and respond rather than react. Zones of Regulation as a framework for teaching emotional identification and self-management. Conflict-resolution strategies that guide students in communicating, perspective-taking, and choosing constructive responses. The RAIN strategy (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture) as a simple, repeatable method for processing difficult emotions. This session aligns directly with the theme of Strategic Counseling and Student Empowerment by offering targeted, developmentally appropriate interventions that build students’ autonomy, resilience, and decision-making skills. Counselors will leave with actionable tools to help students understand their choices, regulate their emotions, and take ownership of their responses in challenging situations.

Identify evidence-based strategies (Mindfulness, Zones of Regulation, Conflict Resolution, and RAIN) that help students recognize their ability to choose their responses to adversity. Explain how each strategy supports emotional awareness, self-regulation, and student agency.

Demonstrate practical counseling techniques for teaching these skills to students across grade levels. Apply the strategies to real counseling scenarios to promote resilient, empowered student

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decision-making. Evaluate which approaches best align with individual student needs and school counseling goals related to strategic counseling and empowerment.

**Dr. Caroline Lopez-Perry** *Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of the School Counseling Program at California State University, Long Beach, CA*

First Author: **Equity-Driven Leadership in School Counseling:** How to Champion Justice for All Students

**Dr. Erin Mason** *Associate Professor in School Counseling Program and Coordinator of the Counselor Education and Practice Doctoral Program at Georgia State University*

Second Author: **Equity-Driven Leadership in School Counseling:** How to Champion Justice for All Students

**Session Overview:** “We’re Not in Kansas Anymore: Leadership and Liberation”

These are undeniably complex times, with many feeling uneasy about the direction our society is moving forward. There are more interesting crises in the world today than most of us have witnessed in our lifetimes and our social, political, economic, and educational systems are being tested in unprecedented ways. The dizziness of it all can leave one feeling directionless. In the face of such uncertainty, it is easy to feel powerless. Yet, through it all, school counselors must continue to look forward, believe in something bigger, and take small but significant steps forward (Lopez-Perry and Mason, 2025).

**Shayla Thompson** GSCA School Counselor of the Year (Topic TBA)

### Agenda (Tentative)

8:30-8:40 (10 min) Arrival & Check-in

8:40-9:20 (20 min) Welcome & Introductions

- Greetings from the University of Georgia-Gwinnett
- Greetings from GSCA
- Plan for the Day & Ice Breaker
- Alisha Jordan & Alexcia Massey, Region 3 Liaisons

9:20-9:50 (30 min) Session 1: Shayla Thompson **GSCA School Counselor of The Year**

9:50-10:00 (10 min) **Break**

10:00-10:50 (50 min) **“Little Learners, Big Futures: How K-12 Counselors Build Postsecondary Pathways from Day One” From Curiosity to Career: Designing Strategic Counseling Moves That Grow with Students.**  
Kenard Weaver, Atlanta Technical College

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10:50-11:00 (10 min) **Break**

11:00-11:50 (50 min) **Helping Students Gain RESPONDability**  
Natalie Grubbs, Georgia State University

12:00-1:00 (60 min) **UTI Presentation/Lunch**

1:00-1:50 (50 min) **“We’re Not in Kansas Anymore: Leadership and Liberation”**  
Dr. Caroline Lopez-Perry, Associate Professor, California State University  
and Dr. Erin Mason, Associate Professor, Georgia State University

1:50-2:20 (30 min) Level Sharing & Legislative Updates

2:20-2:30 (10 min) Closing & Evaluations