

GaDOE Updates

GaDOE.org

Fall 2016

FROM SUPERINTENDENT WOODS



On Saturday, November 12, I found myself in a room with many of my heroes. As we marked the 45th anniversary of the Georgia Teacher of the Year program, I was honored to celebrate with some of Georgia's finest educators.

On that day, we recognized the "best of the best" in Georgia education. That includes our district-level teachers of the year, our 2017 Georgia Teacher of the Year, Casey Bethel, and our Honorary Teacher of the Year, First Lady Sandra Deal. It also includes the generations of Georgia Teachers of the Year who have lifted up their colleagues and made a difference in the lives of students.

These individuals are true heroes -- to me and, more importantly, to their students. I'm grateful for this program that helps us recognize great teachers year after year, and I can't wait to see what the next 45 bring.

Richard Woods



"Every day, we have to go in and demonstrate passion," TOTY keynote speaker Kim Bearden said. "That's what it's all about."

GEORGIA'S EDUCATION PLAN

Celebrating 45 years of Georgia's best teachers

Here's one thing we know for sure: it's impossible to measure a teacher's impact. In small moments, every day, a great teacher can change a child's trajectory. In doing so, they affect the lives of people they'll never meet.

That was the message shared by keynote speaker Kim Bearden at the 45th Anniversary Georgia Teacher of the Year Gala, held Saturday, November 12 at Lanier Islands.

"If you affect the life of a child, one child, you're having an impact on everyone that child will one day impact," Bearden said. She delivered that message to an audience that included many of Georgia's district-level teachers of the year -- each one of them part of the legacy of Georgia's Teacher of the Year program.

For nearly half a century, this program has recognized the "best of the best" in Georgia education, shining a light on the teaching profession and recognizing individuals who give of themselves to support students.

"Teaching is the single most important job in our society," State School Superintendent Woods said during his remarks. "You probably remember the teacher who helped you discover your passion for teaching others, and I'm sure there was a teacher who encouraged you to see the world in a different way. Teachers leave a profound mark on our lives."

During the event, Superintendent Woods also named Georgia's Honorary Teacher of the Year: First Lady Sandra Deal, who spent her career in the classroom and continues to advocate for Georgia's children.

"Forty-five years of selecting Teachers of the Year -- that's really special," First Lady Deal told the teachers in attendance. "For you to be counted among those individuals is something to be proud of."



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AROUND THE STATE

Georgia is developing its plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which will guide education policy in our state for years to come. We asked for your feedback, and over the last several months, we've heard from thousands of you. Here are a few of the early themes that have emerged. View a longer list at bit.ly/ESSAfeedback.

Accountability

Many participants have suggested simplifying the CCRPI and making it easier to understand. Attendees at public feedback sessions have expressed interest in learning about school safety, student growth and achievement, teacher effectiveness and qualifications, and school climate through the accountability system.

Assessment

Parents are interested in clear, simple results that let them know their child's progress against expectations and against their peers. Participants have also suggested making test results more timely.

Educator & Leader Development

Teachers should have additional promotion and career path opportunities, participants have told us. They've added that educators want to collaborate and see what other school systems are doing.

Federal Programs

Strong teacher and principal professional development should be a key part of school improvement plans, attendees told us -- and communities should get involved in school improvement.

Educating the Whole Child

In the most well-attended group at nearly every feedback session, participants are telling us that schools should be community hubs for mental and physical health services, and students should be engaged earlier to develop their passions and interests.

Learn more at gadoe.org/ESSA

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Pam Morgan, Woodstock Elementary School



Pam Morgan is an art teacher at Woodstock Elementary School in Cherokee County Schools, and the 2017 Georgia Art Educator of the Year. We talked with her recently about the impact of arts education, encouraging creative thinking, and the flexibility effective teaching requires. View an excerpt below and the full article at educatinggeorgiasfuture.org.

What impact has arts education had on the lives of your students?

My students authentically enjoy their art class time, not to mention what a self-esteem booster art is. It's so wonderful to see their faces light up when they see their art exhibited in our hall displays or art exhibits. Art class teaches my students the elements and principles of design, but more importantly it teaches them empathy, kindness, collaboration and how they can each make a difference in this world.

What's the last moment that caused you to stop and remember why you love teaching?

Oh, that's an easy one. Looking into the faces of the sweet children that I teach daily is my greatest joy.