



Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

Thank You Letter to Georgia's Parents

By DR. JOHN BARGE
State School Superintendent

Nov. 15, 2012 – The school year is in full swing, and the fall is upon us.

November is Parent Engagement Month in Georgia, and schools across the state are highlighting the role parents play in a student's education. In addition, Nov. 15 is National Parent Involvement Day, a time for all parents to consider how they can get more involved in the education of their children, regardless of the grade level.

So far, it's been a busy year with many changes, from the implementation of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards to the continued roll out of the state's new teacher and leader evaluation system. We want to challenge our students and elevate our teaching methods to meet the demands of the 21st century economy. We want to not only test knowledge, but teach students how to apply it in real-world situations.

We are also working hard to get our new College and Career Ready Performance Index ready. The index will let teachers put their focus back on the child in the classroom instead of just worrying about the test - because there's so much more to accountability than a test score. We want to put the focus back on the children, which will ultimately lead to improved student achievement.

The only way we will be successful with these initiatives is if parents are actively involved in them. Please become involved in your child's school and encourage your friends who have children to do the same. Engaged parents can make the difference between a school that's barely getting by and a school that's thriving.

When it comes to parent engagement, the research is clear: when schools, families, and communities support each other, students of all backgrounds and ability levels achieve at the highest levels.

As the father of a teenage daughter, I know how challenging it is to stay engaged in the lives of our children. Life is demanding, and there is almost never enough time to get everything done, but being involved in your child's education is arguably one of the most important roles we play as parents.

Anyone can be an involved parent by just showing up, but I challenge each parent to become more engaged in the process by asking questions, getting the facts and getting more connected to your child's education.

To assist parents in the process, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) provides resources for parents and schools to encourage parent engagement. One of the resources is a Parent Engagement Month calendar that provides specific ways parents can find out about school activities and get connected with other parents and school officials. While the calendar is designed to be used in the month of November, parents can also use it to find ways to engage in meaningful conversations and positive interactions with their children throughout the year.

To access an electronic copy of the calendar or to learn of other parent engagement resources provided by the GaDOE, please contact our Parent Engagement office at 404-656-2633 or visit our website at <http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/External-Affairs-and-Policy/AskDOE/Pages/Parent-Engagement.aspx>

Parents, the strength of your support is immeasurable. When we educators hit a bump, help us plow through it. We simply cannot succeed without you and your support.

On behalf of our schools and school systems, I want to thank all the parents and families who have taken on the full-time job of being engaged in your child's education. Throughout this month, I hope you will take time to become more involved, but please do not stop there. When November is over, please continue being a part of your child's education. With actively engaged parents and families, my vision of making education work for all Georgians will become a reality.

Dr. John Barge, a parent and a former school administrator, is Georgia's State School Superintendent.