



2014 Georgia Family Engagement Conference Summary

January 9-11, 2014, 1,200 parents and educators arrived at the Classic Center in Athens, Georgia to attend the 2014 Georgia Family Engagement Conference. This conference, a partnership between the Georgia Department of Education, Title I, Part A, Georgia PTA and United Way focused on family engagement in ***Building Connections: Sharing Responsibility to Impact Student Achievement and Success***. Participants had the opportunity to learn many new ideas and strategies for building stronger partnerships that modeled a shared responsibility for education between families, schools, and communities, PreK-12 across Georgia.

Highlights of the Conference Included:

- Dr. Maria Paredes from WestEd shared the Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) model which is a classroom-based, teacher-led, data driven family engagement model. Its innovative design is rooted in training families to support academic goals by linking home and school learning. Given the focus of the APTT model and its research-based results, the Georgia Department of Education is initiating a partnership with WestEd to pilot the delivery of an APTT Trainer of Trainer model for Title I schools in our state.
- United Way and Georgia PTA held an interactive parent leadership session showcasing a method of bringing about meaningful conversations by implementing parent cafés within the school community as an effective tool for engaging families. A parent café is an innovative yet simple methodology for hosting conversations about questions that matter for education, students, and academic achievement. Parents left with a toolbox of best practice ideas and the needed resources to implement a parent café that provides a platform for discussion, identifying goals, and implementing collaborative solutions focused on and for all students. As a result of the conference, new parent cafés are already developing across Georgia schools and districts.
- Well regarded and nationally recognized keynote speakers Dr. Steven Constantino, Michele Brooks, and Aric Bostick shared the practitioner side, research side, and motivational side of family engagement, leaving attendees energized and ready to implement sustained family engagement in Georgia. Dr. Constantino even stated that he believed the Georgia Family Engagement Conference to be the best in the nation given our inclusive audience and focus on this important work!
- Local, state, and national leaders Dr. John Barge, Georgia State School Superintendent, Katrina Mitchell, Vice President of Education for the United Way of Greater Atlanta, and Otha Thornton, President of PTA shared inspirational messages on the importance that the school, the community, and the parents play in ensuring student achievement and success.
- State Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council members modeled parent leadership at its best by serving as workshop session facilitators, developing a Family Engagement Conference video, sharing what works in family engagement on a panel, delivering speeches on the topic of the school, the community and the parent's role in family engagement, and holding a speed networking session to allow participants the opportunity to share promising practices and ideas for family engagement.
- 43 fascinating workshop sessions and learning opportunities covering ESEA parental involvement compliance, research - based best practices for family engagement, parent leadership and skills building, and student support and achievement resources for parents were offered by school, school district, state, and national level presenters.

The Georgia Department of Education

- Georgia PTA hosted 37 family engagement vendors and exhibitors from across the country to connect with participants in order to share the most current and relevant parent engagement programming offered as resources to engage parents in the academic successes of their children.
- Twelve best practice boards showcasing innovative parent engagement programs from around the state at the community, parent and school levels were shared providing participants with ideas for implementation back in their schools and districts. These boards sparked conversations and further networking about family engagement research-based practices among participants.
- Throughout the conference participants wrote their observations and experiences about family engagement in education on our Inspiration Station boards. While many comments were received, the few mentioned below truly capture the energy and learning that took place over the three day event:
 - *Inspired, Motivated and Charged.*
 - *I'm FIRED UP!*
 - *Keep it [family engagement] simple, but make a lasting impact.*
 - *Create an environment that helps parents feel welcome, appreciated and needed.*
 - *As a parent, I am leaving empowered!*
 - *Create a major movement to connect family and school to propel student achievement. Parent leadership is necessary to move the needle in student achievement.*
 - *Family Engagement is the center for strong student success!*
 - *There must be collaboration with staff, teachers, and administration in reaching out more to parents - family engagement must be a strategy for the entire school community to impact student achievement. Thanks for the ideas!*
 - *Family engagement took on a new meaning for us! Parental Involvement is different than family engagement – we must move beyond compliance to make a difference.*
 - *Trust and communication builds relationships and partnerships.*
 - *Welcoming environments in our schools are key – I work for you!*
 - *Raise parent leaders to raise more parent leaders!*
 - *Family engagement is schools/educators, communities, parents/families, and students all working together to increase student achievement.*

The evaluations received were extremely positive with **97%** reporting that overall they were either satisfied (33%) or very satisfied (64%) with the conference and similarly, **97%** responded that overall they were either satisfied (30%) or very satisfied (67%) with the organization of the conference. Many comments reflected that this was one of the best conferences they had ever attended. There is no doubt that this conference brought family engagement in education to the forefront in Georgia and that those who attended left inspired and ready to implement much of what they learned.