

“Educating Georgia’s Future”

PARENT ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2015

“STRENGTHENING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOLS”

Since taking office as Georgia’s School Superintendent on January 13, 2015, I have been focused on improving outcomes for K-12 students and championing policies that are child-focused and classroom-centered.

Two months into office, I understand one important fact – none of this will happen without your help. Without meaningful collaboration between parents and educators, we cannot accomplish our mission of Educating Georgia’s Future.

Early on in my journey as an

educator, I discovered the value of parent and community support. As a former teacher and administrator, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of involved parents on individual children – and on entire communities. The 2015 Georgia Parent Leadership Award winners and the Superintendent’s Parent Advisory Council members show us that parents are making a difference in our schools and communities. Time and time again, we see that involved parents are the driving force in making success possible for all students. As your State School Superintendent, I look forward to

further opportunities to support strong family-school partnerships.

I am grateful for all of your hard work and dedication, and want you to know that I am open to your feedback and concerns. Please reach out and share your thoughts at any time – my email address is rwoods@doe.k12.ga.us. I am here to provide Georgia’s students with the best educational opportunities possible, and to provide support to our teachers, administrators, and parents. I want to hear what you have to say.

-MR. RICHARD WOODS, GEORGIA’S SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

FROM THE GEORGIA PIC NETWORK BLOG

“Teachers That Make A Difference”

I would like to thank an awesome teacher named Mrs. Melissa McCallar who I first met when my kids were in Pre-K. This is my story how she made an impact in my son’s life.

One day, I was desperately trying to find a book that interested my middle son. After spending hours at the public library and the Joseph Martin Elementary School library, I couldn’t find anything that held his attention. Just as we were about to leave, in walks Mrs. McCallar and asks why my son Patrick wasn’t checking out any books like his sister, Eboni, who had an arm full of books.

Of course my son, being the wiz kid that he is, responded by saying, “I’m not a big reader like my brother and sister. I’m more into numbers and math.”

To which Mrs. McCallar, being the fabulous teacher she is, replied, “Why not do both?”

I smiled and explained how I had been searching for books that might interest him but was having some difficulty because I was not a very big reader myself. Sensing that I was in need of some help, she paused for a moment and suggested that I introduce him to the children’s book series Junie B. Jones.

We tried it, and my son – the one who hated reading, especially books with more than fifty pages – now reads books with 200 or more pages and was recognized this past summer for reading the most books in all of Liberty County!

As a parent, I couldn’t be more grateful for teachers like Mrs. McCallar. She could have easily gone on her way that day and not offered to help. But she chose to stop, ask questions, and get involved. Because she took a moment out of her day to assist a distressed parent, she helped

ignite my son’s love of reading – to which I am forever grateful.

Mrs. McCallar is now helping parents and students at the high school level and her new school, Bradwell Institute, recently won first place at the state level in the Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl.

I wanted to share my story to let educators know that they can and do make a difference. I would like to thank Mrs. McCallar and all the other educators who choose to get involved and make a difference in the lives of students and their parents every day!

*-by Wendy Underwood
School Superintendent Parent Advisory Council Member*

For more blog posts, videos, and engaging discussions visit the Georgia PIC Network blog at: gadoeparentengagement.edublogs.org

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Students who participate in transition activities that engage students, parents, and staff members are less likely to drop out of high school.

School Transition:

Why it matters

Every year millions of students transition from one grade to the next and sometimes that can mean transitioning to a whole new school. Whether a student is going from home to kindergarten or from middle school to high school, beginning a new school is a big change.

Transitioning from one school to the next should be a process - not an event. If designed well, school transition programs help prepare students and families to develop skills, knowledge and relationships that help students successfully move from one setting to another. No matter your child's age, school transition activities help to set realistic expectations of school, relieve unnecessary anxiety, and pave the way for a rewarding school experience.

Kindergarten Transition

The first school transition a child normally experiences is starting kindergarten. Leaving the safety and familiarity of their home environment and venturing into a new and unfamiliar one can be very stressful. A successful transition to kindergarten can help your child be more self-confident, develop relationships with others, and be better prepared for school. Here are a few tips on how you can prepare your child for their transition into kindergarten:

- » Get your child into a morning and bedtime routine and practice a month before school starts.
- » Take a tour of the school with your

child to help alleviate fear of their new environment.

- » Help your child practice self-help skills such as being responsible for bringing materials home, tying their shoes, or eating at a table.

Middle School Transition

Middle school can be a whirlwind of social, emotional, and physical changes that can overwhelm your child. If not prepared with the skills needed to cope with these changes, a student's academic achievement, future aspirations, and feelings of self-worth can suffer. Here are a few tips on how you can help prepare your child for a successful middle school transition:

- » Take a tour of the school with your child and help them map out a route to each class.
- » Meet your child's teacher and other school staff, and ask them what your child can expect in their first few weeks of school.
- » Ask for the upcoming school calendar and encourage your child to make note of school events and activities that might interest them.

High School Transition

It is very common for students to feel a great sense of apprehension upon transitioning from middle school to high school. During this time, there is a misconception that

parents should be less involved than they were in elementary or middle school. However, your involvement is crucial in order for your new high school student to be off to a good start. Here are a few ways that you can do your part in supporting your child's successful transition into high school:

- » Help them develop responsibility by teaching them the importance of setting goals and holding themselves accountable.
- » Be aware of what assessments and classes your child will be expected to take and help them stay on track.
- » Nurture their independence by encouraging them to venture outside of their comfort zone by exploring extracurricular activities.

For more information about how you can help your child's school transition, visit our School Transition page at <http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/School-Transition.aspx>

Parents!

Have an idea to contribute to the newsletter? Send your parent involvement ideas and articles to us through your parent involvement coordinator or e-mail us directly. If your idea or article is published, your name will appear in the newsletter!

Planning for GRADUATION

(Hint: Start Early)

Obtaining a high school diploma is crucial in today's society and although almost all parents aspire for their children to graduate, they can often make the mistake of starting to prepare their child too late. Benjamin Franklin was quoted as saying "by failing to prepare you are preparing to fail," and to adequately prepare your child for high school graduation, the seeds must be sown much earlier than 11th or 12th grade.

Research has shown that the majority of students who drop out of high school miss significantly more days of school in first grade than students who do graduate. Studies such as this reveal that bad habits are learned early on in a child's academic career and ultimately lay the foundation for their academic success or failure. For this reason, it is important to start early in preparing your child for success. The following tips are a great way to ensure your child stays on track for graduation!

Get Involved! It's a fact: children perform better in school when their parents stay involved. By being involved you can address any problems that may arise, such as bullying or academic concerns, and help them get back on track.

Make education a priority. Establish your expectations for academic success as early as possible. Instilling good habits and a positive attitude towards school from the very beginning allows your child to know what is expected of them.

Be positive. When you regularly celebrate your child's successes they tend to have higher self-esteem and ultimately perform better in school.

For more tips of how you can support your child's track to graduation visit: www.parenttoolkit.com.



High school graduates earn higher salaries, are less likely to depend on public assistance, have health problems, or engage in criminal activity.

-EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

8 Ways to Motivate Your Child to Succeed to in School via [Scholastic](#)

Your child is naturally curious and eager to learn. By making school and homework as pressure-free as possible, you can help protect him from stress and boost his academic achievement.

1. Show enthusiasm for your child's interests and encourage her to explore subjects that fascinate her. If she's a horse nut, offer her stories about riding or challenge her to find five facts about horses.
2. Ask about what he's learning, not his grades or test scores. Ask him to teach you what he learned in school today.
3. Help her organize school papers and assignments so she feels in control of her work.
4. Build his sense of responsibility by allowing him to choose extracurricular activities, assigning him chores, and asking his input on family decisions.
5. Ensure that she has plenty of time for unstructured play.
6. Celebrate his achievements, no matter how small. Completing a book report calls for a special treat or finishing a book allows him an hour of TV.
7. Focus on his strengths, encouraging him to develop his talents. Even if he didn't ace his math test, he may have written a good poem in English class or improved his spelling score. Besides offering him a math workbook or computer program for practice, give him a writing journal.
8. Check in with your child regularly to make sure she's not feeling overloaded. If she is, help her prioritize her work.



The 2015 Georgia Parent Leadership Award Winners!

CRYSTAL EPLIN
Gwinnett County Schools

MELINDA GITTLEMAN
Marietta City Schools

ANTWAN MCKEE
Atlanta Public Schools

LORI ROWE
Tift County Schools

TOWANNA WALKER-MILLER
Camden County Schools

TYESHA WHITELY
*Savannah-Chatham County
Public Schools*

Congratulations to the six parents selected as the winners of the 2015 Georgia Parent Leadership Awards! The Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Parent Teacher Association created the award to recognize parents across Georgia who utilize their various skills and talents to strengthen our schools and positively impact the lives of our children.

The Georgia Parent Leadership Award recognizes the many skills and talents of Georgia's parents. Parent Leadership Award winners are chosen not only based on their demonstrated talents, but also on how their work has benefited the

entire school community on behalf of all children. The award also hopes to inspire all parents to use their unique talents, no matter how big or small, to lead the way in building positive outcomes for all children.

Winners of the Georgia Parent Leadership Award are afforded opportunities throughout the year to share their many recognized talents by promoting and assisting with parent engagement activities at the state Title I level. To learn more about the Georgia Parent Leadership Awards visit: <http://tinyurl.com/mos2z5j> for more information.

MARCH

Music in Our Schools Month

- This month promotes students having access to music education taught by excellent music instructors.

APRIL 12 - 18, 2015

Week of the Young Child

- The purpose of this week is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families.

APRIL 20 - 24, 2015

Public School Volunteer Week

- This week invites families to assist school teachers and administrators with everyday activities by volunteering with their children.



APRIL 23, 2015

Take Our Daughter and Sons to Work Day - This program was created to inform the future generation of young boys and girls about the variety of career paths they can have.

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Vision Statement

The Parent Engagement Program believes that parents, schools, families, and communities working together can create meaningful partnerships that ultimately lead to significant gains across the board in student achievement.

Have a Question?

AskDOE

404-656-2800 ❖ askdoe@doe.k12.ga.us

We're on the Web!



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Georgia Department of Education

Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent
"Educating Georgia's Future"