

GaDOE Updates

Educating Georgia's Future

September 2015

FROM SUPERINTENDENT WOODS



As a former teacher, there's no contest when it comes to my favorite part of my job. The best days are those that allow me to get out in the field and spend some time with students and teachers.

I was fortunate to experience several of those days early this month.

We hit the road August 4 for the first of our **Educating Georgia's Future town halls**, and spent the next four days visiting schools and communities in Middle and South Georgia.

In the evenings, we hosted town halls for educators, parents, and any community members who wanted to attend. We talked about math, testing, and a whole host of other education issues. At each stop, I heard from people who care about students and want the flexibility and support to help them learn.

Back in Atlanta, we're continuing our work to provide that flexibility and support in classrooms all over Georgia. We just hired science and social studies personnel in departments that previously operated with one staff member each. We're also revising our science and social studies standards, and giving the public a chance to offer feedback.

And we're planning more Educating Georgia's Future town halls in other parts of the state -- because we do a much better job here at the state when we have feedback from the classroom.

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SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

Back-to-School: Visits & backpacks

As the 2015-16 school year began, State School Superintendent Richard Woods hit the road in a car stuffed with backpacks, ready for a week of school visits.

From August 4 to August 7, Superintendent Woods and GaDOE staff visited schools in seven districts and hosted three **Educating Georgia's Future town halls**. It was a chance to observe successful programs -- from Houston County agriculture courses to elementary classes in Marion County -- as well as an opportunity to talk with educators, students, parents, and community members about education issues.

And the backpacks loaded into the car? Those were DOE Back-to-School Packs, donated by agency staff members.



Over the summer, Superintendent Woods heard from educators and parents about the need for donated backpacks and supplies in Georgia's schools. In response, he asked GaDOE staff members to come together and donate backpacks stuffed with supplies for Georgia students.

The resulting backpacks were distributed in seven metro-area school districts -- and some traveled with Superintendent Woods to South and Middle Georgia for distribution in schools there.

"Our role is to support schools and districts in any way possible," Superintendent Woods said. "This is a simple gesture, but I hope it was a meaningful one for the students who received backpacks and supplies."



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AROUND THE DEPARTMENT

Hires bolster science, social studies support

State School Superintendent Richard Woods has hired personnel for two new positions at GaDOE -- one in science and one in social studies, areas that previously operated with only one staff member. Mr. Kenneth Linsley will serve as science program specialist and Ms. Amanda Joy Hatcher will serve as social studies program specialist.

GaDOE seeks input on science, SS standards

The Georgia Department of Education is seeking public feedback as it conducts a review of the Science and Social Studies K-12 standards. To provide input, visit bit.ly/gadoestandards.

Rep. Brooks Coleman receives Impact Award

Superintendent Woods honored Georgia Rep. Brooks Coleman with the first Superintendent's Impact Award in recognition of Rep. Coleman's sponsorship of House Bill 91. To date, more than 17,000 Georgians have become high school graduates as a result of HB 91.



Local superintendents will give feedback

Superintendent Woods has created a Superintendents' Advisory Council, composed of 19 local superintendents from urban, suburban and rural districts in every RESA district in Georgia, to provide feedback on the impact of policy decisions at the local level. Superintendent Woods also meets regularly with teacher, parent, and student advisory groups.

ON THE ISSUES

Supt. Woods on Opportunity School District

In 2016, Georgians will vote on a constitutional amendment creating an Opportunity School District, which would step in and place chronically underperforming schools under state control.

In my view, the Georgia Department of Education's role in this proposal is simple: it's our job to make sure schools aren't failing in the first place. I've charged my staff with making sure no school ends up on this list because they didn't have the resources and support they needed from us.

I'm not talking about twisting numbers or gaming the system. I'm talking about real support and real improvement, on behalf of the students who are our foremost responsibility.

Read the rest of this op-ed, and learn about the specific ways GaDOE is offering support to struggling schools, at gadoe.org under "News & Announcements." Direct link: bit.ly/gadoeOSD.

SOCIAL MEDIA VOICES

"Overheard in a K class: 'Ms. Bryan's house is REALLY nice! I bet she sleeps there.' (pointed to the carpet where class sits) #gafirstday"

**Chicopee Woods Elementary School
(@ChicopeeWoods) on Twitter**

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