

THE GEORGIA
FAMILY FRIENDLY
PARTNERSHIP
SCHOOL AWARDS

2015
WINNERS



Congratulatory Message from Georgia's State School Superintendent



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It is a privilege and an honor to announce the five Title I school winners of the 2015 Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Awards. Families, schools, and communities working together create meaningful relationships that ultimately lead to significant gains in student achievement and success. It is the school's responsibility to take the lead to develop and sustain this essential relationship by nurturing welcoming environments throughout the school and community.

The schools honored today are environments where families and community members feel they belong and, in turn, play an important role in supporting their school and their student's success. These schools have spent time and effort evaluating and refining their physical environments, communications, personal contacts, and school policies and procedures to ensure that all families feel included and welcome. They are models for engaging families and making parents feel welcome the moment that they walk in the door.

These schools represent the best in customer service for Georgia families, whether it's on the phone, in the front office, or on the Internet. These schools have welcoming staff members, comfortable waiting areas, clear signage, and engaging displays of student work on display throughout the building. They have easy-to-navigate websites that foster strong partnerships with parents to help improve student achievement. The schools also provide unique and innovative parent engagement programming that successfully reaches all families in the school. Most importantly, families are respected and seen as an integral part of every student's education.

It is my hope that other Title I schools will learn from these schools and participate in Georgia's Family-Friendly Partnership School initiative to ensure that all parents are welcomed into their schools. Through these small but influential changes, we will continue educating Georgia's future!

Congratulations to our 2015 Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Award winners!

Sincerely,

Richard Woods

About the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Awards

The Georgia Department of Education launched the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School initiative in the summer of 2010 to assist Title I schools, families, and communities in working together to create welcoming environments that lead to increased student achievement. A welcoming environment increases family engagement, which, in turn, helps students earn better grades, graduate from high school, and enroll in post-secondary education. This award takes the initiative a step further by recognizing Title I schools that have gone above and beyond to create an environment where families and community members feel that they belong, and where they play an important role in supporting their school's student success.

All Title I schoolwide schools that have not received the Family - Friendly Partnership School Award within the last five years are invited to submit a written application for the award. A panel of respected educators, parents, and community members from across the state evaluate the applications and select up to twenty finalists.

School principals are notified of their finalist selection, and then judges conduct school site visits over a three-month period. Site visits are not announced in advance. During the site visits, judges conduct surprise walk-throughs and interview school staff and visitors to assess each school's welcoming environment. Following the school visits, the judges select the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Award winners. Up to ten schools may be honored with the award each year.

From the award announcement date, each school that is honored with the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Award is designated as a Family-Friendly School by the Georgia Department of Education for five years. The school receives a special visit from the State School Superintendent to celebrate and honor its designation, a welcome mat to display at the school's front entrance identifying its family-friendly award status, and a special professional learning opportunity provided by The Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center. This opportunity is designed to further enhance the winning schools' ability to provide welcoming environments to increase parent engagement to help improve student academic achievement.



The Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Awards are annual awards that recognize Title I schools for their exceptional commitment to fostering welcoming environments that encourage families to become active partners in improving student achievement and success.

About the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Awards

The Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Awards are part of a larger initiative throughout the state to foster welcoming environments in Georgia's Title I schools. Schools are encouraged to complete the Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership initiative process before applying for the award.



The following four factors are considered when assessing a school's welcoming environment:

1. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical appearance of the school building and surrounding areas, such as the main entrance, halls, parking lots, signage, and landscaping.

2. PERSONAL CONTACT

The visible interactions between school staff and families or community members, such as acknowledging parents or guests in the school, friendly greetings from front office staff, or public recognition for parents and community members who volunteer and contribute to school and student success.

3. COMMUNICATION

The way that the school keeps families and the community informed through sources like welcome letters, up-to-date school calendars of events and holidays, staff directories, announcements on social media websites, or school maps for visitors; information for parents should be provided in various languages and easy to understand.

4. SCHOOL PRACTICES AND POLICIES

The opportunity for families and community members to provide feedback, actively contribute by serving on committees that address policies and procedures, or participate in parent organizations that are inclusive of the entire school community.

In addition, schools must address how they are implementing the six National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships by creating welcoming environments to increase parent engagement throughout the school. Prior to applying for the award, schools are encouraged to examine their welcoming environments through the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School initiative materials which include a self assessment, parent survey, walk-through, and virtual module. Completing the initiative before applying for the award provides a more complete picture of what is expected to be an award-winning Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership school.

CAMPBELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Fulton County Schools

Winner

Located in the middle of the city of Fairburn, the faculty and staff at Campbell Elementary School have gone the extra mile to ensure that all families see the school not just as a part of the community, but also as the heart of the community. From the cheerful mailbox for parent suggestions at the entrance of the school to friendly school staff and various parent events, Campbell's efforts to welcome all parents and families are evident from the moment one enters through the doors.

Each morning, staff members are posted throughout the hallways of Campbell to welcome parents and students, but visitors can expect a warm and friendly greeting at any time of the day from the helpful front office staff. Parents can be seen on a regular basis walking down the cheerfully decorated halls and visiting their child's classrooms. Additionally, Parent Liaisons are also a staple at the front entrance to invite parents to the Parent Resource Center for workshops or to check out instructional materials.

Teachers know the importance of communication with parents and keep their doors open every day to welcome parents to join their classrooms. School calendars, newsletters, and flyers are sent home weekly to encourage participation in upcoming school and community events. Open communication with teachers is strongly encouraged by extending invitations for parents to arrange teacher conferences or visit their child's classroom. Always mindful to include all families, Campbell also reaches out to Spanish-speaking families through a bilingual community liaison to assist parents with language barriers.

This school is a hub of activity for families and the community and have enjoyed more parents participating in family-friendly activities, such as Family Fitness Night, Walk to School Day, Fall Literacy Night, and other parent workshops. But Campbell Elementary knows that schools do not exist in isolation, and they need the support of the entire community. Therefore, the school is actively involved with the City Planning team, and continuously collaborates with local businesses in the community by actively participating in events, such as the Old Campbell County Parade and the local Chick-fil-A's Spirit Night.

This charming elementary school displays and practices the essence of family engagement, and it is evident that their families feel the same way. Congratulations Campbell Elementary School!

All Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Award winners exhibit characteristics such as:

Outstanding customer service with families, whether by phone, email, or face-to-face meetings, that goes above and beyond to make all families feel welcome and to equip them with the information needed

An overwhelming feeling of a positive school climate immediately upon entering the school building



Winner

CENTERVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Houston County Schools

(Winning Characteristics Continued)

Engaging displays of student work throughout all parts of the school

Placing welcome desks and signage, as well as comfortable, living room-type environments for visitors in the front office or in the school foyer

Showcasing the school's diverse student and family population through pictures, artwork, and murals in foyers, classrooms, and hallways



The mission of Centerville Elementary School is to serve as a home away from home for its students, teachers, and families. Upon entering this family-friendly school, one is greeted by the welcoming environment. With readily available parent resources in the front office and the principal greeting families every morning at student drop-off, it is easy to see why parents and families feel welcomed at this school.

Inspirational messages painted throughout the hallways encourage students to be their best and immediately capture the attention of visitors. The school features a special dining environment, called the Mustang Café, where parents can enjoy a meal with their child during lunch or breakfast. Beyond the Mustang Café, the walls of the cafeteria are painted from floor to ceiling in fun themes for the students and families to enjoy. With numerous parent volunteers visiting the school on a regular basis, the school even created a special place for parents to meet and work.

By encouraging parent involvement and collaboration, family-school partnerships are a top priority at Centerville Elementary to improve student achievement. In response to parent requests, Centerville implemented “Homework Headache” workshops to assist parents in helping their children with homework. Additionally, to give parents a better understanding of their student’s strengths and weaknesses, Centerville implemented student-led conferences for students to proudly share what they are learning and the goals they set for themselves.

With email, text message, social media, and QR codes, Centerville guarantees that they stay in constant contact with their families. Families are also kept informed with a monthly newsletter titled, “Did You Know,” which is packed with information on the standards being taught in the classroom as well as tips and strategies to get involved in their child’s education at home. Centerville Elementary is also sensitive to possible communication barriers and translates correspondences into different languages and provides an interpreter for parent conferences and meetings. The Parent Involvement Coordinator stays busy meeting the needs of Centerville’s families by maintaining the Parent Resource Center, coordinating parent events, and personally calling hard-to-reach families.

With their continued dedication to involving and empowering parents, there is no doubt that this wonderful school will reach new heights thanks to their families! Congratulations Centerville Elementary School!

CHESTATEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Forsyth County Schools

Winner

If asked for a one-word description of Chestatee Elementary School, many would respond with “community”. As the oldest school in Forsyth County, Chestatee has always had a strong sense of community pride.

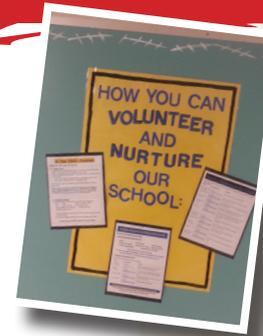
Building and sustaining relationships between faculty and family is an integral part of Chestatee Elementary. From the positive phone calls home, to the one-on-one conferences, teachers and school staff constantly strive to build relationships that support student learning. Chestatee’s efforts to ensure that families feel welcomed begin long before the launch of the school year. In July, events such as Kindercamp and Kindergarten Round-Up help new students and their parents become members of the school family. School staff also extend a warm welcome to the entire student body by sending personalized postcards to each student before the school year.

From the moment parents pull into the designated visitor parking spaces, they know that they are a special part of this school. Upon entering the school, front office staff members make an extra effort to greet parents and welcome them into the building. Family-friendly bulletin boards and information pamphlets adorn the front entrance, providing parents with information about upcoming school events and volunteer opportunities.

Additionally, Chestatee reaches out to develop and sustain relationships with the Spanish-speaking families in their community. Displaying pictures of the bilingual staff members and having translated materials available in the front office helps ensure that these parents and families feel comfortable when visiting the school. Bilingual teachers also host summer sessions for families to strengthen the bonds between school and home. This past year, a celebration was held at the end of the six-week session where families were given tablets to assist in learning at home.

Finding innovative ways to establish and utilize their community partnerships has allowed Chestatee to shine. With the help of local businesses, Chestatee implemented a program called Project Connect to provide home devices and Internet access for qualifying students. This program has made a difference by enabling these students to stay on track with their peers.

Chestatee undoubtedly serves as an example of a family-friendly school. Congratulations Chestatee Elementary School!



(Winning Characteristics Continued)

Forging non-financial partnerships with community and faith-based organizations to impact student achievement and success

Displaying directional and informational signage in multiple languages aligned to the school's student and family population

Providing parent and student information in easily accessible areas in the school office or at the school entrance



Winner

HARRIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Gwinnett County Schools

(Winning Characteristics Continued)

Showcasing fun themes in the lunchroom, gym, and other common areas

Showing evidence of parent support, parent pictures, and thanks to parents and community partners throughout the building

Providing a designated, comfortable space for parents to meet with each other, as well as with staff, to discuss or receive information regarding student achievement and success



Truly a community school, Harris Elementary embraces and welcomes the families who comprise their community to show them that the school is as more than just a building. There are countless opportunities throughout the school year for faculty and staff to create and maintain authentic parent partnerships focused on the academic success of the children.

At this Gwinnett County school, the faculty and staff know that parents can be a powerful resource in a child's education. To empower parents, the Harris Parent Center was established by parents, community members, and school staff. This center is open daily and is a place for parents to interact and volunteer, as well as access programs, workshops, and resources that support parent development. Through the Parent Center, Harris Elementary created an innovative program, the Parent Leadership Development Model, to provide parents with leadership curriculum and training.

The teachers at Harris Elementary help develop relationships and create positive first impressions with parents by displaying pictures of themselves reading their favorite books. The principal even keeps her office door open to welcome parents to stop in at any time. As parents walk the halls, clear and colorful signage directs them to the different classrooms and key locations in the building. The student body at Harris Elementary represents a very diverse population, and communication is a priority to welcome all families. Beyond sending home correspondences in various languages, the school also formed a Multi-Cultural Parent Team to strengthen parent-teacher communication with families from different cultures.

At Harris Elementary, school staff and administrators are diligent in establishing meaningful partnerships within the community. Harris Elementary is able to offer numerous workshops, meetings, and events that bolster student and parent achievement by partnering with organizations, such as the University of Georgia, United Methodist Church, and the public library in Duluth.

By continuing its mission to empower and engage all parents, there is no doubt that this school will continue to flourish. Congratulations Harris Elementary School!



WARE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Ware County Schools

Winner

Keeping parents actively involved at the high school level can be a challenge; however, the faculty and staff at Ware County High School (WCHS) are committed to creating a school culture that engages their parent population. Upon entering this family-friendly school, it is evident that the faculty and staff care about the families and community. Beyond the reserved parent parking spots and the friendly faces greeting visitors in the front office, this school goes above and beyond to create a welcoming environment for everyone.

To welcome families each year, WCHS hosts events, such as a back to school Open House and an annual cookout for the entire community. Thanks to various collaborations with community stakeholders, WCHS hosts one of its most innovative events, the Teen Maze. This event enables parents, families, and students to examine the consequences of life's choices through educational, fun, and interactive display stations and the event has proven to be a huge success. Parents are an integral part of the school improvement planning process, and every student and his or her parent(s) meet with an advisor to choose classes for the upcoming school year.

An inviting Career Center and Parent Involvement Room is conveniently located near the main entrance of the school, where helpful college materials, school resources, and career information are available in both English and Spanish for parents. There are also weekly opportunities for students and parents to meet with a college and financial aid professional to learn more about the college admission process.

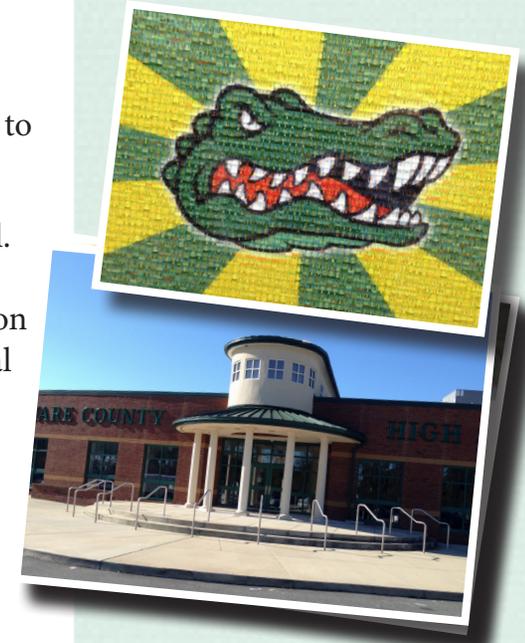
At WCHS, building relationships is essential to family engagement and growing as a school. Student work and school achievements are proudly displayed outside of classrooms for parents to see the positive direction that the school is headed. Parents receive information on a regular basis through personal phone calls from teachers, as well as through various social and local media outlets. As a result of these different efforts, the involvement of parents on leadership teams has increased significantly over the past few years. Parents participate in monthly meetings at the school and take part in activities that build their skills and capabilities to become active advocates for their children's success.

It is their innovative practices and ideas that make it easy to see why this school is the first high school to receive this award! Congratulations Ware County High School!

(Winning Characteristics Continued)

Ensuring school grounds are well-kept and the school's name is easily recognizable from the road, as well as at the entrance to the building

Providing an engaging, easy to navigate, up-to-date and relevant website with important school information



BEAR CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL Barrow County Schools

As soon as one enters Bear Creek Middle School, the effort and dedication that school staff put into creating a welcoming environment is clear. With a cozy lobby, colorful student artwork adorning the halls, and an accessible Parent Center, it is easy to see why parents and families thoroughly enjoy being part of this school community. Other family-friendly highlights include the following:



- » The school hosts a family engagement night every month with different themes connected to academics. These events provide parents with tools and tips, including websites, apps, and handouts, that can help support student learning at home.
- » The school boasts a media center where parents are allowed to check out a set of textbooks so that they have access to the material their child is learning at home.
- » The teachers are always available and willing to meet with parents, including scheduling three weeks for parent conferences throughout the year. Plus, teachers make positive parent phone calls for every student in the school each semester.
- » The school hosts an annual Parent Day to inform parents about ways to volunteer and communicate with staff and offer breakout sessions to provide other important information.

CLINCH COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL Clinch County Schools

It is not hard to see that parent involvement is one of Clinch County Middle School's top priorities. The inviting music in the school's entry way, fun directional street signs painted on the walls, and enthusiastic staff all create an environment where parents know that they are valued. Other family-friendly highlights include the following:

- » This school offers a dedicated full-time staff member who coordinates programs to educate parents while finding tutoring opportunities for their children.
- » Family Reading Nights are held every month in the school library where students and parents read together and participate in a literacy program. In consideration of working parents, the library offers two sessions at parent-friendly times.
- » The school employs a full-time social worker who provides transportation to doctor's appointments and offers assistance for student and parent medical needs.
- » The school encourages and empowers parents to utilize specific skills and expertise for volunteer opportunities. A new program, Panther PAWs (Parents As Workers), was implemented to encourage parents from each classroom to volunteer their time at the school.



MOORE MIDDLE SCHOOL Gwinnett County Schools



Families and staff are truly equal partners in student success at this welcoming school. Thanks to school staff and administrators constantly striving to create an inviting and family-friendly environment, parents at Moore Middle School know how much they are appreciated. With its colorful bulletin boards and friendly staff greeting parents as they enter, Moore radiates a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Other family-friendly highlights include the following:

- » The school partners with their local PTA to host a “Back-to-School-Bash” to kick off the year with staff, parents, and the community.
- » The school provides an inviting Parent Resource Center that offers convenient hours for parents to access resources, materials and tools.
- » To encourage parent volunteers, the Parent Involvement Coordinator developed a volunteer handbook and facilitated an orientation for all new parent volunteers.

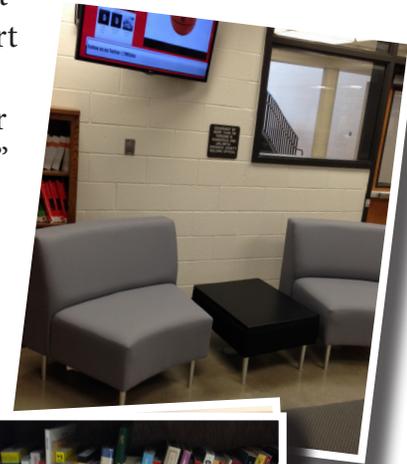


- » To ensure parents are prepared for their parent-teacher conferences, the Parent Resource Center hosts workshops for parents to receive information and resources.

TEASLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL Cherokee County Schools

At Teasley Middle School, there is no doubt that parents and families are an integral part of the school. Whether delivering dinners to a family who recently lost a loved one, or throwing their annual “Spirit of the Season” event to raise donations for families in need, this school finds ways to meet the needs of their families. Other family-friendly highlights include the following:

- » The school employs a bilingual Parent Involvement Facilitator and receptionist to welcome and assist Spanish-speaking parents and families.
- » In partnership with Oakleaf Church, the school implemented SWAG (Students With A Goal), a program that promotes and recognizes positive student behavior.
- » The principal sends weekly email announcements, and teachers utilize text messages and weekly grade-level newsletters to keep parents informed and engaged.
- » This school frequently hosts family-friendly events, such as Parent Technology and Curriculum Nights, with interpreters available for Spanish-speaking families.



The Georgia Department of Education would like to recognize and thank its sponsors for their dedication to improving the welcoming environments of Georgia's Title I schools. Their support of this award program helps to promote the important responsibility schools have to engage families in becoming active partners in improving student achievement and success.



IS YOUR SCHOOL FAMILY FRIENDLY?

*For more information about the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Awards, please visit the Georgia Department of Education's Parent Engagement Program Website at:
http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement*

The Georgia Department of Education
Mr. Richard Woods, School Superintendent
"Educating Georgia's Future"

