



**The Georgia
Family - Friendly
Partnership
School Awards**

2013 Winners



The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards



Congratulatory Message from Georgia's State School Superintendent

It is a privilege and an honor to have the opportunity to announce the four Title I school winners of the 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards. Families, schools, and communities working together create meaningful partnerships that ultimately lead to significant gains in student achievement and success. Yet, it is up to schools to take the lead in developing and sustaining this essential partnership by nurturing welcoming environments throughout the entire school building and community.

The schools honored today understand the importance of what welcoming environments bring to student success. They have spent much time and effort evaluating and refining many aspects of their physical environments, communications, personal contacts, and school policies and procedures to ensure that all families feel included and welcome. Truly, they are models for the entire state regarding how to engage families and make parents feel welcome from 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 view 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 is successful in reaching 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 begin *making education work for all Georgians*.

Congratulations to our 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Award winners!

Best regards,

John D. Barge, Ed.D

Georgia State Board of Education

Barbara Hampton, *Chair*

Helen Odom Rice, *Vice - Chair*

Linda M. Zechmann

Elizabeth J. Ragsdale

Lisa Kinnemore

Kenneth Mason

Mike Royal

Sandra Reed

Brian K. Burdette

Scott Johnson

Allen C. Rice

Mary Sue Murray

Larry E. Winter





The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards



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 Department of Education (GaDOE) 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 now 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 apply for the award by submitting a written application. 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 period of three months. 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.

Each school that is honored with the Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Award is designated as a Family - Friendly School by the GaDOE for five years from the date that the award is announced. 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. This opportunity is designed to further enhance the winning schools' ability to provide welcoming environments to increase parent engagement throughout the schools to improve the academic achievement of their students.





The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards



About the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Awards

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 and/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 such as a welcome letter, up-to-date school calendar of events and holidays, a staff directory, announcements on social media websites or a school map for visitors. Information for parents should be provided in various languages and should be 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 also 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 in advance of completing the award application provides a more complete picture of what is expected to be an award winning Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School.

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 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards



Enota Multiple Intelligences Academy **Gainesville City Schools**

WINNER

**ALL GEORGIA FAMILY - FRIENDLY
PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL AWARD
WINNERS EXHIBITED PHYSICAL
CHARACTERISTICS SUCH AS:**

- Outstanding customer service with families - whether by phone, email, or face - to - face. The schools went above and beyond to make all families feel welcome and to equip them with the information needed.
- Overwhelming feeling of a positive school climate immediately upon entering the school building
- Engaging displays of student work throughout all parts of the school

Enota Multiple Intelligences Academy knows the importance of developing a strong school community which is why they have created their own family-friendly town within the school called Smartville, USA. Charged with supporting a diverse population of 800 students and a free or reduced meal rate of 65%, the school's unique, easy to navigate learning atmosphere is not the only creative practice used to engage families, their innovative programming and positive attitudes are also the key to success!

When speaking about family engagement, Principal Dr. Matt Maynor describes the school's philosophy as "we accommodate parents, not ourselves." Parents are welcomed into the school building at any time and do not need an appointment. Individual parent tours of the school are scheduled throughout the year at various times to accommodate parent schedules. The school holds multiple parent events and workshops, usually once in the morning and once in the evening to ensure that all parents have the opportunity to attend and receive information that will help them to support their children's success in the classroom. Most notably, the school has partnered with an apartment complex in its school attendance zone where teachers and administrators deliver the Scholastic Read and Rise program curriculum to foster sustainable and systematic literacy engagement with families in their own community.



Teachers and school staff foster a sense of community in the school building by saying hello and engaging in regular conversation with family and community members alike. Parents are spotted throughout the day participating in school activities, volunteering in classrooms, mentoring children, or helping the school's parent involvement coordinator. The school's parent resource center also provides online English classes to parents, which many families utilize regularly. Congratulations to Enota Multiple Intelligences Academy!





The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards



Shiloh Middle School **Gwinnett County Schools**

WINNER

(CONTINUED)

- Displaying welcome desks and signage, as well as a comfortable living room type environment for visitor seating 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
- Forging non-financial partnerships with community and faith-based organizations to impact student achievement and success

Shiloh Middle School strives to find authentic ways to bring parents to the school, to work with them in the community, and to support them at home. With about 1,800 students and a 67% free or reduced meal population, Principal Dr. Eli Welch, III relies on consistent communication to ensure that families know that they are wanted and needed in all aspects of their children's education!

Once a month, the school hosts parent observation days where parents are able to drop in at any time throughout the day to observe their children's classes. Parents are welcome to stay as long or as little as their schedules permit, and of course, if they are unable to attend on parent observation day, they are welcome to come and visit at another time. Parents have responded very positively to these opportunities as a way to help them understand what their children are learning in class. These opportunities have fostered better communication among school faculty and staff, as well.



The parent center serves as a hub of activity for families at the school. Parents have the ability to complete an online or hard copy form called a "Parent Prescription" to get resources and materials sent home with their children to help them in academic subjects. School counselors partner with teachers of English learners (EL) to host special EL family nights where parents share their favorite cultural dishes and discuss topics of academic interest regarding their students.

The school strongly believes that it can not continuously improve, academically, unless families help in the process; therefore, school programming is driven by parent feedback. Teacher teams also contact parents through a rotation schedule to touch base with them about student progress. They send good news postcards home to families, and the principal regularly invites parents to participate in informal chats regarding school issues. Finally, to ensure that all faculty and staff continue to nurture a welcoming environment, the school has worked with a few of its local partners in education to deliver professional learning on customer service. Congratulations to Shiloh Middle School!





The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards



St. Simons Elementary School **Glynn County Schools**

WINNER

(CONTINUED)

- 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
- 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

St. Simons Elementary School knows that it is the impact of the family that makes the biggest difference in a child's life. That is why, in a school of about 500 students with a 55% free or reduced meal rate, a sense of community is key to ensuring that all students reach their maximum academic potential!

Walking through the halls of St. Simons there is a shared vision of friendliness that among teachers, school staff, students, parents and community volunteers. Everyone is valued as important and everyone is focused on helping students succeed. Faculty and staff go the extra mile to ensure that families feel welcome, are informed, and are engaged in opportunities to enhance their children's learning. About 50% of the students who attend the school are bused or driven to the island from the mainland each day. To ensure that these families have regular opportunities to interact with the school staff and participate in activities, the school goes to the mainland to host parent workshops, parent-teacher conferences, and family fun nights. They set up shop in local parks, churches, and other community buildings.



The school's principal, Suzanne Clements, values two-way communication with the families. She listens to the needs of her families and is transparent in her efforts to be informative and responsive to their needs. For example, when parents participate in surveys throughout the year a summary of the results is shared with all families, along with how the school is addressing any issues that may have been identified. This type of ongoing communication between the school and families has built trust and increased parent participation in school events, ultimately benefitting the students.

The school also has an active parent center that hosts a grandparent connection group, a growing Hispanic outreach program and a thriving mentor program for at-risk students. Congratulations to St. Simons Elementary School!





The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards



Woodstock Elementary School Cherokee County Schools

WINNER

(CONTINUED)

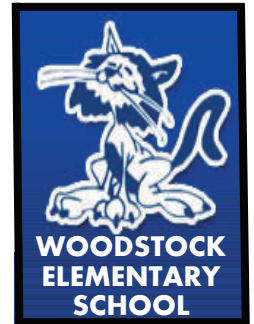
- Providing a designated, comfortable space for parents to meet with each other, as well as with staff, to discuss or receive information regarding student achievement and success
- Ensuring school grounds are well-kept and the school's name is easily recognizable from the road, as well as at the entrance of the building
- Providing an engaging, easy to navigate, up-to-date and relevant website with necessary and important school information

Woodstock Elementary strives to make everyone who enters the school feel comfortable and valued the minute they walk through the doors. With families from thirty-seven countries represented among its 1,000 students and a 49% free or reduced meal rate, assessing the needs of all families and exploring new ways to reach and support their involvement is crucial!

The principal, Dr. Christy Bowling, describes the school as proactive, not reactive when it comes to working with families for the success of all students. It is common to see the school leadership, as well as its faculty and staff, out in the community visiting and working with families at local churches, community centers, or even at students' homes. Faculty and staff receive professional development from the administration on effective parent engagement strategies, and during common planning time teachers discuss the best ways to engage families in the educational process of the school. Home-school communication remains a strong part of the school's success, with parents receiving weekly emails and phone messages from the school.

The school has a robust tutoring/mentoring program called "Camp Learnalotta" where parents can volunteer or request services for their children. The program consists of over thirty regular volunteers who spend at least thirty minutes a week working one-on-one or in small groups with students to remediate, accelerate, or maintain their academic skills. Parents also utilize the academic resources of the well stocked parent resource center called "The Cottage" and the media center, which is open late to accommodate working parents' schedules.

To ensure that new parents to the school feel welcome, a new families' coffee is held at the beginning of the school year to introduce them to school staff in an informal setting. The event allows staff to share ways in which families can be involved and can become familiar with the school's educational program. In addition, a welcome committee, staffed by parent volunteers, personally calls new families to welcome them to the school and to share valuable information about how to become involved and stay connected. Congratulations Woodstock Elementary School!





**The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards
FINALISTS**



**Fort Middle School
Muscogee County Schools**

Fort Middle School strives to meet the diverse needs of its families and students. Walking through the building, it is clear that one way that they accomplish this is by honoring the unique history of the school and the community in which it resides, as well as highlighting the school's dedicated parent and community volunteers. Other family - friendly highlights are:

- The school provides each family with a parent involvement guide every nine weeks that contains strategies to help them support and share in their child's educational success.
- The school sends a message from the principal, by phone and email, to all parents each Sunday night to ensure that parents are engaged in the life of the school and the academic success of their child.
- The school holds community job fairs with local employers to help meet the needs of students' families and members of the local community.
- The school ensures that 90% of all its families are contacted at least five times during the school year to ensure positive home-school communications.

**Hightower Trail Elementary School
Rockdale County Schools**

Hightower Trail Elementary School makes parents feel welcome immediately upon entering the school. Colorful artwork and positive, family - friendly signage throughout the school make it easy for families and visitors to find and access various classrooms or popular school areas. Other family - friendly highlights are:

- The school's faculty and staff make "happy calls" twice a week to different families to report good news.
- The school provides a well-equipped parent center that is easily accessible to parents at the very front of the building.
- The school holds four to six ice cream socials in the neighborhoods surrounding the school at the beginning of the school year to build trust and rapport among families and school faculty and staff members outside of the traditional school environment.
- The school collaborates with over fifty active business, community-based, and faith-based organizations to provide a variety of services and supports to students and families.





**The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards
FINALISTS**



Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary School
Clarke County Schools

Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary School staff works hard to engage families, and what they are doing works! The school regularly holds family-fun events such as parent breakfasts, family science nights, culture nights, and other workshops focused on student achievement that result in high participation from parents. Other family - friendly highlights are:

- The school hosts a monthly “Principal’s Coffee” to talk with parents and share academic information.
- The school utilizes various forms of communication to reach its families such as phone calls, flyers, social media, email, text messages, and a bilingual newsletter.
- The school holds Parent and Children Together (PACT) time once a month at the school. PACT time is composed of interactive learning sessions for parents and children in the classroom. Instructional activities are modeled by homeroom teachers and are delivered in English and Spanish.
- The school holds a “Seeing is Believing Tour” each year during which members of the community are invited to tour the school, experience day - to - day activities, and learn how engage in a partnership with the school.

Snellville Middle School
Gwinnett County Schools

Snellville Middle School knows the meaning of customer service. Its front office provides a welcoming environment with top notch, professional staff. Directly next door is its parent resource center where the excellent service and inviting atmosphere continue. Other family - friendly highlights are:

- The school holds parent focus groups to ensure that the school is constantly improving school-home communications.
- The school has a model parent resource center with convenient hours of operation. It is a comfortable environment for parents to meet and there are academic learning resources for families to check out, computers for parents to use, and all kinds of information to educate and inform families about school and community events.
- The school celebrates National Parent Involvement Day by inviting parents in for classroom observations. Parents are able to schedule other classroom observations throughout the year.
- The school has a Volunteer of the Month program. Each volunteer is recognized in the school newsletter to encourage other parents to get involved.





The 2013 Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Awards FINALISTS



Shiloh High School **Gwinnett County Schools**

Shiloh High School ensures that its website is easy to navigate, visually appealing, and up-to-date with relevant content and information. For many high school parents this is their first stop for information, and it is easy to see why. The school also ensures that parents, without easy access to technology are well informed by providing a welcome desk and parent center conveniently located at the entrance of the building. Other family - friendly highlights are:

- The school's parent resource center is located adjacent to the counseling office. The center has extended hours to meet the needs of working families and provides past parent workshop materials as well as audio/visual workshop recordings for parents to view if they were unable to attend.
- The school partners with community organizations to regularly offer multicultural, artistic, academic, sporting, health and safety type classes, workshops, and other events at the school for students, families, and others in the community.
- The school requires all teachers to update their class webpages weekly with homework assignments and other information to ensure that parents can monitor their child's academic work.
- The school highlights and honors its cultural diversity throughout the building by using pictures, murals, and other art forms to create a welcoming environment.

Sponsors **Thank You for Your Support**

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.



THE RITZ-CARLTON





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 Website at:
http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement

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