

GaDOE Updates

EducatingGeorgiasFuture.org

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FROM SUPERINTENDENT WOODS



As of January 11, the Georgia General Assembly is back in session.

Here at the GaDOE, this is a busy season as we carefully keep track of pending legislation that has the potential to impact Georgia's students, teachers, and classrooms.

As a state agency, the Georgia Department of Education does not have the power to introduce legislation. However, we work in partnership with the State Board of Education and with legislators to provide information on education-related bills. That includes making them aware of the feedback we've received from teachers, parents, students, and other education stakeholders, as well as my views and those of the State Board.

I want you to know that the recommendations I have made and will continue to make to Georgia's legislators are based on the feedback you have provided. On visits to schools, during town hall meetings, and through the voices of the more than 53,000 teachers who responded to our recent survey, I've heard that over-testing and over-burdensome accountability are keeping teachers from doing their jobs and keeping students from learning.

During this legislative session, I will continue to share what I've heard with members of the General Assembly. I have high hopes that we can continue to move toward a more child-focused, classroom-centered view of education here in Georgia.

STATEWIDE NEWS

Supt. Woods makes recommendations

State School Superintendent Richard Woods addressed members of the joint House/Senate appropriations committee Jan. 19, and members of the joint House/Senate education committee Jan. 21. Below is a brief summary of Superintendent Woods' recommendations.

On Testing

Federal requirements call for 11 standardized tests during the course of a student's academic career; Georgia law requires almost three times that. Our requirements should better align to the federal level.

We should eliminate Milestones testing requirements for students who participate in Move on When Ready and earn credit in their college classes.

We should establish an Assessment Innovation Fund and work with districts to consolidate and streamline testing.

On Accountability & Evaluation

We need to loosen the weight of test scores for teacher evaluation and fill the gap with a professional growth component.

Students need to be in class more to count toward a teacher's performance. Currently, a student can miss up to 63 days, and their test score will still impact their teacher's performance measure.

We should move toward using school districts' Charter System and Strategic Waiver performance contracts as their sole measure of accountability.

To view more of Superintendent Woods' recommendations, visit: bit.ly/gadoerecs1, bit.ly/gadoerecs2, bit.ly/gadoerecs3, or the #gadoerecs16 hashtag on Twitter.



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AROUND THE DISTRICTS



High school graduates from the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)'s secure facilities across the state gathered Jan. 20 to receive their diplomas. The Georgia Preparatory Academy at DJJ is one of Georgia's school districts, with dual accreditation, a complete school day, and state standards taught by fully certified teachers.

At the ceremony, DJJ Commissioner Avery Niles shared these words with the graduates: "Every one of you here has a chance to start over and make the best of your life. At this point, your success depends on realizing this is the time for you to make positive changes."

GEORGIA'S STANDARDS

We need your feedback on proposed new science and social studies standards! To learn more, visit

bit.ly/gadoestandards16.

Public comment is open through March 14 at 5 p.m.

GADOE STRATEGIC PLAN

Initiative: Develop a statewide literacy plan

Each month, we'll share our progress on a specific initiative from the GaDOE Strategic Plan. To view the full plan, visit bit.ly/gadoestrategicplan.

We are proud to partner with the Get Georgia Reading Campaign to work across state agencies and organizations to support early literacy. (You can learn more about the Campaign and its four pillars at www.getgeorgiareading.org.)

Currently, GaDOE sponsors more than 30 projects, programs, and initiatives with Get Georgia Reading partners across the state. One example: we collaborated to mail more than 250,000 books to kids in kindergarten and pre-k. The books included links to resources and instructions to opt in to a text-messaging service that sends reminders to families about how to support literacy development. Thousands of families have opted in to the texting service. Both English and Spanish versions are available. (Sign up: bit.ly/gaready4k.)

One of the GaDOE's programs, Striving Readers, has shown that with the right leadership and resources, schools can successfully work with community partners, families, and teachers to ensure that all children become readers. In the upcoming months, look for a summary of the findings from this investment that turns striving readers to successful readers.

Why GaDOE Updates?

This newsletter is intended primarily as a print communication for parents and other stakeholders who may not receive email, web, and social media updates from the Georgia Department of Education.