

GaDOE Updates

EducatingGeorgiasFuture.org

March 2016

FROM SUPERINTENDENT WOODS



March marks an important month in Georgia: it's Read Across Georgia month, a time when we spread the word about the joy of reading and the importance of literacy in our students' lives.

Reading is a crucial building block of academic success. Children who can't read proficiently by the end of third grade are more likely to struggle in school and in the future. That's just one reason we promote literacy among the students of our state.

We'll continue to share information on reading and literacy throughout the month, and heading into the end of the year, we'll share resources for summer literacy.

Happy reading!

Richard Woods

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

SB 364 **passed the Senate unanimously** Feb. 26, and now moves to the House. If signed into law, this bill would lower the weight of test scores on teacher evaluations from 50 to 30 percent and reduce the number of standardized tests required by Georgia law. The bill "reflects many of the issues I've felt all along are burdensome to student learning," Superintendent Woods said. **Read his full statement at bit.ly/onsb364.**

FOCUS ON LITERACY

Read Across Georgia Month begins



March is Read Across Georgia month, and on March 3, we got to celebrate in a way that was truly *by students, for students.*

The GaDOE and State School Superintendent Richard Woods partnered with Change 4 Georgia, a student-run service organization out of Forsyth County, to provide books for the children of **Boyd Elementary School** in Atlanta. Thanks to C4G's generosity, Boyd Elementary now has 1,000 new books!

Partners across the state also came together March 3 to kick off the month of reading and celebrate the importance of literacy. Governor Nathan Deal, First Lady Sandra Deal, DECAL Commissioner Amy Jacobs, Superintendent Woods, Get Georgia Reading Director Arianne Weldon, and Coy Bowles -- of Zac Brown Band, and a Georgia native -- all spoke.

"Think about the impact of the written word on the world," Superintendent Woods encouraged the crowd. "Think about its impact on our nation. That's important for Georgia's children."

In his remarks, Governor Deal invoked a quote from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*: "Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing."

"Just as we need to breathe in air to live," Governor Deal said, "we need to breathe in knowledge by reading...to live well."

Read a longer version of this story at www.educatinggeorgiasfuture.org.



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AROUND THE STATE

AP program earning accolades



Georgia is ranked 13th in the nation for the percentage of students scoring 3 or higher on at least one AP exam, and is tied for third in the nation in one-year growth in those pass rates, according to data released by the College Board. Georgia students, teachers, and schools are also earning AP honors. Superintendent Woods has recognized 272 AP Honor Schools, three Georgia teachers were recognized as the 2016 AP Professionals of the Year for the Southern Region, and Georgia is home to two AP Scholars for 2015. Learn more at bit.ly/georgiaAP.

SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

Public comment on the proposed new science and social studies standards is still open, through March 14. Visit bit.ly/gadoestandards16.

We're also seeking public feedback on guidelines for the upcoming K-12 STEAM certification program. Visit bit.ly/gadoeSTEAM.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Ana Cristian, Pope High School

Ana Cristian, a junior at Alan C. Pope High School in Cobb County, has a message for her fellow students: you can excel in more than one arena.

Cristian, 17, is a USA Fencing All-Academic First Team member and the 2014-15 Women's Champion for the Georgia High School Fencing League, a peer tutor in French, a member of the National Honor Society, and a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity.



"Joining fencing has undoubtedly changed my life," Cristian said. "I used to be very reserved, but now I always feel confident and empowered."

"Consistently going to fencing practice has not hurt my grades either, because I have had to adapt and learn to develop a work ethic to meet the growing demands of both school and fencing."

We asked Ana about her experience in Georgia's public schools -- what she's enjoyed most, and what's been most challenging.

"I love learning about something new and instantly being able to apply it and make connections to what is going on directly around me and on a global scale," she said. "It is so cool to learn something in calculus and see it also apply to physics, or to learn about a small event in history and see how it has had a huge impact on our modern lives...I like the opportunities that I get to learn about the world and why it functions the way it does, not just how."

Read our Q&A with this student at educatinggeorgiasfuture.org.