Superintendent’s Parent Advisory Council Meeting
Title I Parent Meeting
May 3, 2012

I. Welcome

Michelle Sandrock opened the meeting by welcoming all of the Parent Advisory Council members and reviewing the agenda for the day. Michelle proceeded to refer PAC members to the “Think it Through Form” that was located inside their folders and instructed them to use it as a tool to write down their questions and feedback for Dr. Barge as the day went on.

Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent, proceeded to facilitate the meeting and he started by talking about the Georgia ESEA Flexibility Waiver. He stated that one week after our last meeting, the waiver was passed. Ten states received a waiver. After the president made the announcement, Dr. Barge engaged in a conference call with Secretary Duncan. During that call Secretary Duncan mentioned that state of Georgia specifically and said that it could potentially be a model for this for this type of flexibility waiver. He referred the PAC members to the Parent ESEA Waiver FAQ sheet that was provided to help answer some of their questions about the waiver and the impact it will have on them and their children. He talked about the different categories Title I schools will now be identified in which are Rewards, Priority, Focus, and Alert. He briefly explained each category and stated that their handout would also provide them with more clarity. Dr. Barge proceeded to review the College and Career Ready Performance Index for Elementary, Middle and High Schools. He reviewed the supplemental indicators in each category and discussed changes that would be made. He reviewed the content mastery that students will be tested on and the projected timeframe these tests will be implemented, 2014-2015. Most of the content in the current College and Career Ready Performance Index is solid, but there are a few changes that still need to be made. The ultimate goal is to get student ready post graduation. Lastly, he talked about the new graduation rate and the biggest differences between the new system and the old one. He talked about how students are counted and mentioned that if a student does not graduate in four years, they will automatically be counted as a drop-out in the Longitudinal Data System. There will be a five year cohort granted for accountability and there will also be an option for summer graduates. Credit Recovery Programs may also be available to assist students who need extra help graduating but parents would need to get with their local board of education to find out more details about such programs. He also stated that students are tracked when they withdraw from their school to see if they re-enroll into another school in the state because many drop-out on their own or say they are transferring but never enroll into another school. All of these situations affect the graduation rate for the state.
II. National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Michelle Sandrock and Patty Yohn, Georgia PTA Family Engagement Chair, provided an overview of the National PTA Standards for Family School Partnerships. Michelle began by asking what are some definitions of Family Engagement.

Their responses were:

- Involvement
- Playing a role in your child’s education
- Community involvement
- Communication
- Getting involved in homework
- Partnership
- Building relationships
- Attendance at events
- Teamwork
- Having a voice
- Being plugged in

Michelle explained that while all of these individual definitions are good, there must be a general consensus of standards that will set the frame for schools, parents, and the community to get involved. She presented research that stated if families are actively involved in their child’s education; the child will do better in school. This information can be found in *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connection on Student Achievement* written by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp. Michelle stated “Poverty not does not equal lack of parent involvement, but instead, it influences the level of parent involvement.”

Patty Yohn provided the PAC members with some examples of parent involvement at home such as providing breakfast for your child, and helping with homework. Michelle addressed what makes parents more likely to get involved such as A) parents needing to understand that they should be involved, B) parents feeling capable of making a contribution and C) parents feeling invited/welcome by their school and children. She informed the group that having children invite their parent to the school is the first and most effective step to parent engagement. The next step is personalized invites from the school rather than a general flyer inviting parents. Patty reminded the group that family engagement is a shared responsibility between families, schools, and communities. She expressed the importance of using learning activities to bring the parents into the schools.
Michelle introduced Georgia’s Six Family Engagement Standards with a brief historical overview of when the standards were created and when they were adopted by the Georgia State Board of Education. Both Michelle and Patty opened the room for discussion regarding these standards. PAC members were able to share their personal in-school stories and experiences based on each standard.

**Standard One: Welcoming All Families into the School Community.** One PAC member stated “The schools view parents coming to the school as trouble”. Michelle responded to the PAC member and suggested that some parents in general may have to learn how to communicate more effectively with the school and that begins with the school having an open-door policy. The culture of the school must change before they can expect parents to change. The schools must learn to trust parents. Another PAC member responded to the original statement with a comment: “Even though there may be some challenging parents, at least they are communication with their child and they are engaged enough to come up to the school”. Other comments included “The principal sets the tone” and “The principal should have open dialogue with the teachers about parents visiting the schools”. Another PAC member asked “What do you do when the administration does not want the parents there?” Her fellow PAC members said to “mobilize your parent organization”, “e-mail or write a letter to the principal and copy the superintendent about your concerns”, “have a meeting with the principal”, “attend school board meetings”, and “complete a survey addressing parental concerns”. Another PAC member’s advice was to simply “focus on the concerns and not the complaints”. The group agreed that it is important that a parent feel like they can approach their child’s principal.

**Standard Two: Communicating Effectively.** PAC members suggested that teachers and administrators give parents a handbook with a directory that clearly defines the roles of how they can become involved and partner with the school. Some PAC members expressed concerns with communication in the schools which included the limited contact that parents had with other parents. One PAC member stated that home visits at the beginning of the year would be helpful in establishing a rapport with families. Other group ideas for communication from the schools to parents and the community were “use radio/TV/newsletters”, “use social networking (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)”, “use church bulletins”, “parent blast e-mails”, and to also “communicate in the various languages of the families.” PAC members also suggested that schools create parent leaders and partner with community groups and organizations.

**Standard Three: Supporting Student Success.** Each member shared different ways in which they are currently supporting or experiencing contributions to student success at their home schools. One PAC member shared that her school facilitates homework workshops with parents for each grade level on a monthly basis. Another PAC member shared that his school hosted dinner workshops where families can eat and discuss school matters all at once. Other members stated that they have “Spirit Nights” where they sell dinner plates and have tutoring, while others utilize the high school students to provide child care for parents during conferences and workshops. It was suggested that teachers provide parents with the tools to help them help their child with homework. A PAC member then shared that her school has a “Make It and Take It Night” where the teachers do just that; they teach parents mini lessons so they can assist their child with homework lessons at home.
Standard Four: Speaking Up for Every Child. Patty asked the group “How can you empower parents to advocate for their students?” She informed them that every school should have a parent involvement policy and that all parents should be familiar with this document. She also mentioned that there are other ways to inform parents of their rights and responsibilities such as conducting parent involvement workshops and hosting parent group meetings. There was also a personal story shared by one of the PAC members regarding her experience completing the Parent Leadership Academy in Gwinnett County.

Standard Five: Sharing Power. The group was asked “How do you share power [amongst parents-schools-communities]?” Michelle explained that the importance of sharing power is to create a balanced partnership. Parent subgroups can provide feedback to the principal, who can pass the information on to the teachers. PAC members shared that in parent groups, it is important to include all parents, not the same parents who always volunteer their time. PAC members also discussed the different roadblocks to parent involvement. Everyone agreed that parent involvement looks different for each person. But that empowerment gives parents the knowledge and resources to give parents forums to eventually influence policy. It is a must that they share power with the school and teachers. Administration, teachers and staff must also be culturally competent in order to reach the families; educate teachers on family engagement.

Standard Six: Collaborating with the Community. In the essence of time, this standard was abbreviated with an emphasis on why community collaborations are important and PAC members were told to continue building those partnerships at school and district level.

This portion of the PAC meeting concluded with PAC members getting into a discussion about focus and priority schools, family involvement plans, and how parent involvement is being held accountable within the schools. Michelle informed the group that many districts hold schools accountable for parent involvement; in fact, the federal law requires parent involvement in schools. However, there is currently no accountability on the state level.

III. Lunch

During lunch, Michelle encouraged PAC members to use this time to mingle with each other and some of the organizational members so they could get to know one another better. She also encouraged them to take this time to think about additional questions they may have for the Superintendent.

IV. Georgia Family Engagement Conference Discussion and Feedback

During this segment of the PAC meeting, Michelle, Patty and Lakeita opened the floor for PAC members to discuss the 2012 Family Engagement Conference. This created a platform for the PAC members to give their open and honest feedback regarding the conference. The PAC members were eager to express their thoughts and opinions about the events that occurred over the course of the three day meeting in Athens. There were varied comments such as more parents should have been present along with possibly allowing the spouses of the attendees to register in the future. One PAC member stated that there was a “great feel” to the conference and that the speakers were very knowledgeable. Many of the PAC members also agreed that the Parent
Leadership Award presentation was very powerful and they also enjoyed the Parent Moments. It was suggested that the popular breakout sessions be repeated next time and that maybe there should be an option for pre-registration. They suggested that the conference have fewer breakout sessions next time. Other suggestions and comments included “do not use yellow and white on the conference program booklet because it was hard for the attendees to read”. Michelle asked the PAC members how they felt regarding the schedule of events and they responded saying that it worked well for them; however, they did notice that a lot of the educators left by Friday evening and did not stay for the Saturday session and speaker. As a group, the PAC members liked having a project that brought them closer together. Following the 2012 Family Engagement Conference, one PAC member stated that they have been showing the opening “parent engagement” video as an opening for each school meeting. Overall, the PAC members expressed that it was an “awesome first shot!”

V. Fitness Gram

Therese McGuire, Program Specialist at the Georgia Department of Education, shared some pertinent information with the PAC members regarding physical education in today’s schools. She reviewed some major parts of the law regarding physical education requirements for students and teachers. She also talked about how parents should be informed if there is ever a question of concern about their child’s health. She stated that as part of their child’s physical education class, they began participating in an annual fitness testing beginning 2011-2012. This testing will allow their child to become aware of their current fitness levels, set goals for maintenance or improvement, if deemed necessary, and plan ahead for a life that promotes health and fitness. In addition to providing an overview of the assessment, Therese also went into details about the specific exercises students are required to do during this assessment, which includes but is not limited to push-ups, curl-ups and a one-mile run. She shared the fitness gram webpage resources with the group and encouraged them to look further into this program to gain a better understanding of what they and their child should expect.

Dan Fesperman, Program Consultant for the Georgia Department of Health, spoke with the PAC members about georgiashape.org which is a new website that has been designed to help share healthy eating tips, recipes and information with parents, students, and schools statewide. He talked about how Governor Deal is really concerned about the level of unhealthy food that is being dispensed at schools; therefore, this initiative was put into place to help create a variety of accessible healthy options for all. He briefly showed the group the website and navigated to a few of the recipe and exercise pages, which were very family-friendly. He said the site will officially launch on May 25, 2012.

VI. Georgia Graduation Rule and K-12 Math Textbook Adoption

Randy Lee, Program Specialist at the Georgia Department of Education, provided information to the PAC members regarding the graduation rule that applies to students who enrolled in the ninth grade for the first time in the 2008-2009 school year and for subsequent years. He provided details of the rule and gave PAC members a copy of the law written document which addressed the purpose, definition, requirements, mandatory units of credit and areas of study to mention a few. He also shared information with the group regarding the math textbook adoption process.
and explained that all textbooks are selected by the school but are usually based on the state recommended list. The latest change that will take place soon is that the publishers of these textbooks will now provide an overview of their books so schools can have more information about what they are selecting. He provided a handout that included the names of the 2012 Georgia Learning Resources Advisory Committee for grades K-12 and the 2012 Learning Resources Evaluation Sites and Review Schedule for PAC members to have a better idea regarding the structure of these committees.

VII. PAC Member Spotlight

PAC Member, Shondra Carter shared her experience in Washington, D.C. with U.S. Secretary of Education, Arnie Duncan, as she served as the Georgia Parent Representative to the Mom Congress. One article from the Atlanta Voice stated:

Atlanta resident Shondra Carter has been selected by Parenting magazine to represent Georgia at the third annual Mom Congress on Education and Learning conference in Washington, D.C.

Selected for her dedication to improving local schools, Carter is a leader on the PTA board at Dunbar Elementary School, the Local School Council for Dunbar and Parks Middle School, and the State Superintendent of Schools Parent Advisory Council.

VIII. Superintendent’s Wrap Up and Final PAC Comments

During this segment, Dr. Barge also asked the PAC members specific question to get their input and feedback about the Parent Advisory Council. The questions and responses were as follows:

Q: What have you enjoyed about being a part of the Superintendent’s Parent Advisory Council?

R:

• I truly felt like the state does care about what parents think and we all want to see our children do well.

• I enjoyed meeting other parent leaders from various systems and being able to learn more about Georgia’s education system.

• It has been an incredible experience to network with other parents and find out how they do things. The information from Dr. Barge and his team was awesome and I felt very informed on top of everything.

Q: Do you have any suggestions for improvements?

R:

• I think a one year term is too short because I feel like the PAC members just got to know each other and that makes it easy to work together. I would suggest a two year term, rather than one for PAC members.

• I would like to spend more time with Dr. Barge.

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• Specific directions on how to relay or take back information learned to my system.

• Perhaps add a summer session.

Q: What topics do you think are important to discuss in future meetings?

R:

• Mechanics of Title I Dollars

• Legislative Impacts to Georgia Education

• Career Pathways

• Graduation Changes

• Bullying

• Improving Test Scores

• Ways to Bridge the Gap Between Teacher and Parent Empowerment

• Homeless Education

• Discipline

Q: Would you have liked more tasks or projects (such as the Conference Committee Workgroups) or would you prefer to serve in more of an advisory role?

R:

• I think that we had enough tasks.

• I prefer serving in an advisory role.

• Because of the limited number of meetings we have, I feel that our conference project was enough.

• Create a handbook.

• Create an alumni group for past PAC members to continue supporting the Superintendent.
Q: What information/projects have you taken back to implement in your school communities as a result of your participation in the Superintendent’s PAC?

R:

• National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

• After each PAC meeting, I share everything I learn at the Parent Title I Meeting.

• Parent leaders have to be groomed.

• Administration has to be nurtured along on the very same concepts.

• Provide a written summary for our system’s Title I Parent Newsletter.

• Provide a summary of the meeting at local PTA meetings.

In closing, Superintendent Barge said that he greatly appreciated the feedback and that their comments will be given serious consideration as we look at restructuring the layout of the Parent Advisory Council.

IX. Certificates and Announcements

Each PAC and Organizational member was recognized for their service on the 2011-2012 Superintendent’s PAC, awarded with a certificate from the Superintendent and had their picture taken with Dr. Barge. Michelle stated that we will continue to call on our ‘alumni’ council members to help with various projects we may have in the future. Instructions about completing the travel reimbursement forms were given and everyone was informed that the minutes would be sent out in a few weeks. Everyone was given a card with instructions on how to access their picture on Shutterfly. Meeting adjourned.