

PARENT ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Issue 3, Spring 2012

“Successfully Engaging Georgia’s Parents”

“Taking Great Strides to Achieve Success”



**Dr. John D. Barge,
State School Superintendent**

As we move closer to the end of another school year, I want to thank you for the positive contributions you are making to your child’s school and education. This time of year is one of great excitement, as many students are celebrated and honored for their talents and achievements. While it is important to celebrate our students’ successes, it is also important to recognize all of Georgia’s parents for helping make a difference in our schools.

Parent and community engagement is critical to the success of our students, especially when it comes to college and career readiness. Your presence in our schools communicates to school leaders that you believe in the importance of education for your child. Also, your presence shows students that you value their education.

While I have many responsibilities as State School Superintendent, one of the most important and rewarding parts of my job is to visit schools on a regular basis. My primary purpose in visiting schools is to observe student learning and to talk with administrators and teachers about challenges and

opportunities related to the academic and emotional needs of their students. Serving in my previous roles of teacher and school administrator, I have seen firsthand the improvements students make when their parents are involved. As a parent myself, I believe I play the biggest role in ensuring my child is college and career ready.

As we continue to make progress in improving student achievement in our state, I thank you for your continued support in helping us realize our vision of *Making Education Work for All Georgians*.

Sincerely,

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Protecting Your Child from Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has been on the rise and continues to be a challenge for both students and families. Cyberbullying is defined as situations in which someone uses an electronic communication device or some other form of technology to harass, intimidate, threaten, exclude, humiliate, impersonate or harm another person. This is a very non-conventional

form of bullying and many parents are unaware that it is happening to their child. Bullies may use cell phones or computers to send damaging or threatening text messages, emails, photos or videos to other people. It is recommended that parents make it a priority to have open and honest conversations with their child about

cyberbullying and reassure them that it is okay for them to tell someone if they are being harassed, especially in this format. Parents can also seek to work with the school’s technology department to ensure preventive measures are taken such as setting up safety nets and monitoring systems throughout the school district.

Reading Books to Babies



PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

Reading aloud teaches your baby about communication and it also helps build their listening, memory and vocabulary skills.



Too Much TV?

On average, kids spend at least four hours watching television per day. While there is no harm in watching TV, parents should be aware of the amount of time their child dedicates to this form of entertainment. Many parents are concerned about the amount of inappropriate material the media broadcasts as they should be because 44% of children say that they watch something different when they're alone than when they are with their parents. Hence, it is vital to monitor and limit your child's television viewing.

Books for babies should have simple, repetitive text and clear pictures. During the first few months of life, your child just likes to hear your voice, so you can read almost anything, especially books with a sing-song or rhyming text. As your baby gets more interested in looking at things, choose books with simple pictures against solid backgrounds.

Once your baby begins to grab, read vinyl or cloth books with faces, bright colors, and shapes. When your baby begins to respond to what's inside of books, add board books with pictures of babies or familiar objects like toys. When your child begins to do things like sit up in the bathtub or eat finger foods, find simple stories about daily routines

like bedtime or bathtime. When talking starts, choose books that invite babies to repeat simple words or phrases.



Books with mirrors and different textures (crinkly, soft, scratchy) are also great for this age group, as are fold-out books that can be propped up, or books with flaps that open for a surprise. Board books make page turning easier for infants and vinyl or cloth books can go everywhere-- even the tub. Babies of any age like photo albums with

pictures of people they know and love. And every baby should have a collection of nursery rhymes!

One of the best ways you can ensure that your little one grows up to be a reader is to have books around your house. When your baby is old enough to crawl over to a basket of toys and pick one out, make sure some books are included in the mix.

In addition to the books you own, take advantage of those you can borrow from the library. Many libraries have storytime just for babies, too. Don't forget to pick up a book for yourself while you're there. Reading for pleasure is another way you can be your baby's reading role model.

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Family Engagement Conference Overview

February 16 – 18, 2012, 800 parents and educators arrived at the Classic Center in Athens, Georgia to attend Georgia's inaugural family engagement conference. This conference, a partnership between the Georgia Department of Education, Title I, Part A and Georgia PTA focused on family engagement in ***Building Connections: Striving for Excellence, Empowerment and Equity in Education***. Over those three days, participants had the opportunity to learn many new ideas and strategies for building stronger partnerships that modeled a shared

responsibility for education between families, schools, and communities, PreK-12 across Georgia.

Well regarded and nationally recognized keynote speakers Grant Rivera, Karen Mapp, and Joseph B. Washington shared the practitioner side, research side, and motivational side of family engagement that left attendees energized and ready to implement sustained family engagement in Georgia. There were 47 fascinating workshop sessions and learning opportunities offered by promising school, state, and national level

presenters. The U.S. Department of Education staff in attendance announced that Georgia would be designated as a model state in this work. There is no doubt that this conference brought family engagement in education to the forefront in Georgia and that those who attended left inspired and eager to put much of what they learned into practice.

Many have already begun planning for the next statewide Family Engagement Conference, which will be held in 2014. This event made a mark in history and raised the bar for family engagement.

Creating Quality Time for Your Children

In today's society, many families struggle to find a balance between their career and their home life. This power balance can include juggling the hectic schedules of their children's in-school programs and extracurricular activities, along with parent meetings and other work-related responsibilities. And now, more than ever, many parents are even returning to school to further their education, which only adds to the lack of quality time they can spend with their families. Therefore, it is no wonder that many parents wish that they had more quality time each day to spend with their children outside of the family's regularly scheduled activities.

The good news for most parents is this: Most children do not require expensive outings and lavish trips with their families, but just want

to feel like their day and what is going on in their life is important as well. There are many ways to create quality time with your children, no matter how much or how little time you have, by taking advantage of a variety of daily activities. Some of these daily activities include:

Car time: While driving in the car with your child, use this time to discuss different upcoming events that are taking place in your child's life, learn about their friends, or listen to a mutual favorite song. No matter how old your child becomes, there will always be something you can discuss or learn while in the car.

Homework time: While working on homework assignments, use this time as an opportunity to discover what your child is learning in school as well as understand their academic strengths and weaknesses. Engage older

children by assisting them with new ways to approach various assignments, monitor grade reports, track attendance records, and discover possible college or career interests. Make homework time an informative yet fun experience for you and your child.

Dinner time: During or after dinner, use this time to play a family board or card game. Engage older children by asking for their help preparing the meal.

Bedtime: Before bed, use this time to read a book with your child. As your child grows, reverse roles and have your child read to you. Engage older children by discussing their day or certain issues that they may be facing in school or with their friends. Use this time to solidify bonds with your child. Listening and not lecturing is the key.

PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...
Parents who concentrate on developing a good relationship with their kids through spending quality time tend to have kids with a better self-esteem?



Inspire to Become a Parent Leader and School Partner

There are several reasons parents are motivated to become partners and leaders in education. Many want to help other parents overcome challenges similar to their own and are eager to volunteer. Some want to become parent leaders as a way of giving back to the school community that supported them during their childhood. Others want to help the school develop effective and responsive programs and services that will increase student

achievement. Although you may not see yourself as a parent leader or school partner, your input is needed and invaluable.

Some ways that you can seek to take on a leadership role at your child's school could be:

- ▶ Show initiative and don't hesitate to ask for assistance in helping your child succeed
- ▶ Ask questions about the mission, policies, and guidelines of the school

- ▶ Share ideas for activities, fundraisers, or other projects
- ▶ Encourage other parents to take advantage of various opportunities the school may offer

These are just a few examples of how parents can partner with the school and become leaders. The most important thing is to get involved and stay connected because parents are their child's first teacher.

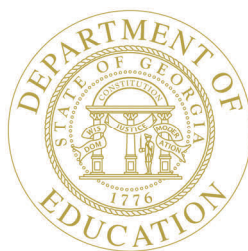
Every child is entitled to have a strong support system that values and encourages educational achievement and there is no one that can provide that better than *parents!*

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Vision Statement

The Parent Engagement Program believes that parents, schools, families, and communities working together can create meaningful partnerships that ultimately lead to significant gains across the board in student achievement.

Calling All Parents!

Have an idea to contribute to the newsletter? Send your parent involvement ideas and articles to us through your **Parent Involvement Coordinator** or e-mail us directly. If your idea or article is published, your name will appear in the newsletter!

Have a Question?

AskDOE
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Remember to block off these important dates!

Public School Volunteer Week

April 15-21, 2012

Week of the Young Child

April 22-28, 2012

National TV Turnoff Week

April 23-29, 2012

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

April 28, 2012

Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

May 2012

National Teacher's Day

May 1, 2012

We're on the Web!

<http://www.gadoe.org/Pages/Home.aspx>
<http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Parent-Engagement-Program.aspx>

Understanding Georgia's ESEA Flexibility Waiver

In September of 2011, the United States Department of Education invited states to seek a waiver from various parts of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (previously known as No Child Left Behind). The Georgia Department of Education applied for and received the flexibility waiver in early 2012. It became effective immediately. What does this mean for students, teachers, parents and families?

The Georgia ESEA Flexibility Waiver affirms the strength of Georgia's education reform initiatives in the areas of improving educational outcomes for all

students, closing the achievement gaps, increasing equity, and improving the quality of instruction. Under Georgia's own statewide accountability system, all stakeholders will now be able to share a common understanding of school district and school performance.

In the past, a school either met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or did not, but many people did not know what this meant or why the school received that rating. Under Georgia's new system, stakeholders will have a complete and comprehensive picture of where a school or district is

meeting performance expectations and where it is not, beyond student test scores. AYP will no longer be calculated and schools will no longer be labeled as "Needs Improvement." Under the new system, 2010 – 2011 school year assessment and graduation rate data will be used to identify a percentage of schools as Reward, Priority, Focus, or Alert schools. These new school designations will provide all stakeholders with a deeper understanding of what resources schools need to be successful in their efforts to further their improvement efforts on college and career readiness for all students.

To learn more about what the ESEA Flexibility Waiver means for Georgia's schools and students, please view the *Frequently Asked Questions for Parents and Families on Georgia's ESEA Flexibility Waiver* under the "Information for Parents" tab at: <http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Parent-Engagement-Program.aspx>

