

Parent Engagement Newsletter



Making Education Meaningful



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

During my conversations and meetings there is one question that is often raised: how do we make education more meaningful for our students? Recently, Education Week released the findings of their 17th annual *Quality Counts* survey, which grades all states on key education indicators. I am pleased to share that Georgia ranked 7th in the nation for the second straight

year and received a perfect score for the indicator on Transition and Alignment, which includes Early Childhood Education and College Readiness. While it is important to grow in our successes, there is no doubt that Georgia is committed to providing meaningful and quality education from early childhood through college and career preparation.

It is an absolute thrill to see schools all over the state implement wonderful and innovative strategies and practices that engage parents and students in the learning process. As we open a new chapter with the College and Career Ready Performance Index, I am confident that we will see more evidence of how

schools and teachers continue to build up our students to reach new heights.

Last of all, I invite all parents to join us in making education more meaningful for our students by being involved and taking an active role in your child's education. This is a very critical time of year as we steer our students successfully across the finish line of another school year. I look forward to sharing more good news with you about the hard work and accomplishments of all students in Georgia!

Sincerely,

State School Superintendent

STAY TUNED...

Have you heard? Planning for the 2014 Family Engagement Conference is underway! Don't miss this fantastic opportunity to learn new ideas and hear what is happening across the state to support family engagement in our schools. Look for more details soon about registration and dates for the 2014 Family Engagement Conference.



Best GET INVOLVED Parent Moments...



I stayed at Pre-K with my twins and watched them complete their lesson with their teacher. At playtime, it seemed like all the children wanted to serve me lunch, so they played waiter and waitress and brought me plate after plate with drinks. Now the twins want me to come back every day!

- Lisa Epps, McIntosh Elementary School



The new technology amazes me. I am able to stay in touch with my two daughters, as well as with their teachers almost every day. I have a great partnership with Rossville Middle School. The staff and teachers make me feel at home.

- Laura McNabb, Rossville Middle School

I was able to attend every activity that involved the parents at Russell Elementary, one each month. It was fun to be there often enough to get to know the students and how our son was interacting with his new friends. I was able to go in and help with some presentations to several

grades. I love being able to be at school often enough to know who each friend is when our son references them in stories about his day.

- Anonymous Parent, Russell Elementary School

My husband and I attended a literary breakfast at my daughter's school. We all ate breakfast together and had a good conversation, just like we do at home. It really got us connected and involved when we all shared together one of the most important meals of the day at school.

- Lorena Lean, Riverside Primary School

Parents, we want to hear from you! Do you have a favorite parent involvement moment to share from this school year? Send in your moment and make sure to include details of the event including what happened, who was involved and why it was your best GET INVOLVED MOMENT!

Start Smart for Summer Learning



PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

According to the National Summer Learning Association, all young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in learning activities over the summer, with the average loss in math over the summer being about 2.6 months' grade level equivalency!

summerlearning.org



PARENTS, LEARN MORE...

To stay informed about the TKES and LKES, visit their website:

www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/default.aspx

With the approach of spring around the corner and the welcome of warm weather, families will be looking for ways to fill those long summer days. But before the family calendar fills up, take some time now to build into your schedule learning enrichment opportunities for your child. Don't take a vacation from learning just because school is closed, but take advantage of the spare time and numerous ways that you can help your child learn and grow throughout the summer.

School camps or programs are a popular choice for many families because these programs offer a specific focus or specialized theme that is a tailor fit to address the needs or interests of their children. Whether it is science, math, or reading, these themed camps not only provide learning enrichment but typically

create a fun and active environment so children do not feel as though they are back in school. Prices may vary, but more schools recognize the importance of these programs and will host events at little or not cost to the families. Begin contacting your local school soon to see if they offer summer programs as there may be limited space or registration deadlines.

Local colleges or universities open their campuses during the summer to attract a wide audience for a variety of camps and activities. Depending on the school, scholarships may be given for summer programs geared towards leadership building, science learning, math competing, fine arts exploring, and history studying! These camps can be a wonderful way for children to explore their academic interests and discover potential careers.

Older children can use these opportunities to learn about college life and the college they wish to attend.

Create your own summer program by developing a list of fun activities and plans for your child. Make a summer reading list or obtain one from your local school, then offer small rewards or incentives such as a pool day or pizza night for every book that your child reads. To compliment the summer reading list, take advantage of local educational hot spots such as the zoo, the aquarium, science centers, museums, national parks or your local library. Many of these sites offer summer specials or family discounts as well as educational materials for families.

Whatever exciting plans your family makes, it's easy to find time for your child to continue learning between the fun and relaxation.

Teacher and Leader Keys Effectiveness System

The state of Georgia is introducing a new system to evaluate the effectiveness and development of teachers and school leaders. The Teacher and Leader Keys Effectiveness Systems (TKES and LKES) will provide principals and school districts with an overall view of teacher and leader performance rather than a single snapshot in time. Teachers will be evaluated using information in two

main areas: Teacher Assessment of Performance Standards and Student Growth and Achievement. The LKES is similar but uses an overall school survey instead of an instructional survey for the TKES.

The main reason for this new evaluation is to reach the ultimate goal of organizing student learning and improving the quality of instruction in all classrooms. Expect teachers and

principals to have more meaningful discussions to improve the quality of instruction for your child. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to provide honest, anonymous feedback regarding their teachers and their learning environments at school. Most importantly, this new system will place an emphasis on student growth and achievement through school improvement and teacher development.

Not So Soft: The Importance of Developing Soft Skills

As parents, we know all about the importance of students learning the “three Rs” in school, but what do we know about the importance of students developing their soft skills? Soft skills, or non-cognitive skills, can make a difference in whether a student is offered a job or admission to college. What are these soft skills? The US Department of Labor defines them as “Personal Effectiveness Competencies” and identifies this skill set as interpersonal skills, integrity, professionalism, initiative, dependability, reliability, and willingness to learn. (USDOL, 2011). The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) groups these skills into four simple categories:

Communication Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Decision-Making Skills, and Lifelong Learning Skills. Since kindergarten, parents have worried about how their child plays with others or participates in class, but have we ever thought about how these personal skills relate to academic success or career readiness?

The development of soft skills can start before children begin school and continue throughout adulthood. These skills are encouraged in the classroom as students are required to give presentations, complete assignments in a timely manner, manage large scale projects, and conduct independent research. Teachers, schools, and state

agencies have realized the importance of developing these skills and placed additional emphasis on incorporating them into the classroom. Furthermore, students’ grades are often tied to their abilities to complete group assignments, deliver presentations, provide in-depth thought, solve complex problems, and other similar non-academic skills.

Due to advancements in technology and challenging economic landscapes, employers are increasingly seeking workers who possess a broader set of skills and who are capable of accomplishing more than ever before. As parents, you can begin working with your children at home to help improve their soft skills.

The following are great suggestions from the NCWD/Youth on how parents can encourage the development of these important skills:

- ◆ Use a flip cam or cell phone to record your child giving directions about something they know.
- ◆ Encourage your youth to participate in school activities that promote clear communication.
- ◆ Have your child take beverage orders when guests visit.
- ◆ Model proper posture, such as standing up straight instead of slouching. Remind your child that proper posture communicates confidence.
- ◆ Play games as a family and encourage team work.

Board games help youths build skills that apply to work.

- ◆ Have your child look people in the eye and shake hands when you introduce him to other adults.
- ◆ Encourage your youth to help an elderly neighbor with yard work or volunteer to serve a meal at a homelessness shelter.
- ◆ Teach your child proper phone manners, such as identifying themselves when making a call and how to take a message.
- ◆ Identify areas of social difficulty for your child and role play how to handle new or unfamiliar situations.
- ◆ Help your youth learn the unspoken expectations of employers, such as being at work on time, not texting during work or not allowing friends to hang out in the workplace.
- ◆ Give your child full responsibility for planning a family meal at least once a month.
- ◆ Hold regular family meetings where everyone reviews schedules and chores and resolves any family conflicts. Rotate which family member is in charge of the meeting.
- ◆ Discuss how people on television handle problems. Talk about whether their behavior or strategies for calming down are appropriate or not.
- ◆ Promote additional opportunities for your child to demonstrate and develop these soft skills.



Go Outside with Your Kids!

- Build & Fly a Kite
- Have a Reading Picnic
- Take & Upload Pictures
- Make a Scavenger Hunt
- Start a Lemonade Stand



Can't Take Your Child to Work?

Many schools and even some employers no longer participate in “Take Your Child to Work Day”. However, there are other ways to help your child learn and explore possible career paths.

- See if there is a career fair/day being held at your child’s schools
- Help your child take a career interest inventory
- Bring your child to your workplace during summer vacation
- Allow your child to interview friends and family about careers

The 2013 Parent Leadership Awards

Volume 3, Issue 3, Spring 2013

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Georgia Parent Teacher Association (GA PTA) created the Parent Leadership Award to recognize parents across the state who utilize their skills and talents to strengthen our schools and positively impact the lives of our children. The award also hopes to inspire all parents to use their unique talents, no matter how big or small, to lead the way in building positive outcomes for all children.

The award recognizes the many skills and talents of Georgia's parents, particularly as they exhibit their

leadership through any or all of the National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

Winners of the Parent Leadership Award are parents or caregivers who have contributed to the school community in a way that is bigger and beyond themselves. Parent leaders are nominated every November during Georgia's Parent Engagement Month by Georgia's public school personnel.

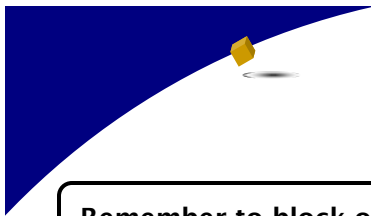
Congratulations to the following nominees on receiving the 2013 Parent Leadership Award:

- ▶ **Tilwana Anderson**, Partee Elementary School, Gwinnett County Schools
- ▶ **Electria Barnes**, Sanders Elementary School, Cobb County Schools
- ▶ **Debra Mainor**, Hillcrest Elementary School, Dublin City Schools
- ▶ **Kellie Martin**, Elcan-King Elementary School, Decatur City Schools
- ▶ **Capucine Pansy**, Eastside Elementary School, Douglas County Schools
- ▶ **States Wing**, Sharon Elementary School, Forsyth County Schools

2013 Georgia Parent Leadership Awards



Use this link <http://tinyurl.com/a8t7smj> to read more about how these amazing individuals made a difference in their schools!



Remember to block off these important dates!

Dr. Seuss Read Across America Day
March 2, 2013

Public School Volunteer Week
April 14–20, 2013

National TV Turnoff Week
April 28–May 4, 2013

Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month
May, 2013

National Teacher's Day
May 7, 2013

National Physical Education & Sport Week
May 6–12, 2013

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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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We're on the Web!

<http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/AskDOE/Pages/Parents.aspx>
<http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Parent-Engagement-Program.aspx>