

# Parent Engagement Newsletter



## Parent Leadership Month is February, 2014!

This month is dedicated to supporting individuals who passionately represent the needs and perspectives of all parents. Parent leaders become role models for parent engagement, advocating not only on behalf of their own children, but for other families as well!



## Have a Great Idea?

Parents, see if your school has a program for parents to welcome and connect with other parents before enrolling their children in school. Consider partnering with the school counseling office to create an outreach program and develop a network of parent representatives.

## Creating a Buzz



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

*Dear Parents,*

There are many buzz words used in education these days that are eye-catching and conversation starters. Recently, I thought about one word in particular that is used almost every day – Accountability. We hold each other accountable to ensure that the job is done properly and expectations are fulfilled. At the Georgia Department of Education, there is an entire

team of professionals that is responsible for producing accountability reports, including the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). This team serves to improve communication between all Georgia public schools and our various stakeholders.

Consistent and reliable communication is critical for good accountability. Limitless amounts of information are accessible at our fingertips, which create a new level of transparency in education. I encourage parents to not only review and follow the latest news from the state and your child's school, but also to provide feedback and input. One way parents can play an active role in their child's education is by reviewing the proposed Career Cluster/

Pathway courses and share your thoughts on the development of these high school courses at <http://tinyurl.com/p5kruw9>. I believe the Career Pathways initiative will provide a level of relevance that we have not seen in our high schools for some time.

We all share an invested interest in the future of our children and know that a quality education is the best vehicle for them to become college and career ready. To that end, let's continue to hold each other accountable and work together to keep moving forward this school year and achieve our goals.

Sincerely,

Dr. John D. Barge  
State School Superintendent

## Family Engagement in the Field: Stories of Success

*This is a new series of articles written for parents by parent involvement coordinators.*

### *"School Tours: A Win-Win"*

In August 2011, a new charter school opened up just a couple of miles from our school. What did this mean for us? Rather than look at it negatively, we chose to see it as an opportunity to better showcase our strengths and to start building relationships with prospective students and their families.

We have always had a very open and welcoming school, but now, because the families had a choice as to where to send their children, instead of five or six families per year requesting tours, I was now giving multiple tours every week.

Rather than offer group tours, I tailor the tour to individual families as far as day, time, or which grades they are interested in and anything else they specify. We visit all parts of the school and the visits are unannounced. The faculty and staff at our school are, without fail, exceptionally cordial, welcoming and professional. Parents never leave unimpressed.

As a perspective parent you should feel comfortable asking for a tour of your school, even if you don't have the option of a charter academy down the road. In some schools it may not be the Parent Involvement Coordinator who gives the tours, perhaps it is the counselor or even a parent volunteer! But a tour will give you a good feel for the school

and also give you the opportunity to meet some of the teachers and other personnel at the school.

The school benefits because families who take a tour tend to be more vested in the success of the school, more likely to champion the school and more likely to volunteer at the school. Overall, tours promote an open, welcoming and collaborative school environment. Call your school today to set one up!

Jessica Ruiz,  
Title I Bilingual Parent  
Involvement Facilitator,  
Woodstock Elementary

*Are you a family engagement professional interested in sharing your story with parents? Please contact Nate Schult, Parent Engagement Specialist, at [nschult@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:nschult@doe.k12.ga.us)*

## Learning in a Standards Based Classroom

When you walk into a standards based classroom, it may appear like any other classroom at first glance. But something is different. Looking around the room you begin to notice clear and helpful information that is posted for the students to easily read. Most visible will be the standards being taught during the lesson for the day displayed with an essential question guiding students towards the overall objective. From posted student work to displayed learning rubrics, the whole classroom and lesson is designed to remove confusion and provide clear connection linking the standards, learning and goals.

There is more than just visual aides in the classroom to

direct student learning. The teacher aligns the curriculum, instruction and assessments to effectively impact student learning. Teachers clearly communicate expectations and goals to encourage and enable students to be more responsible for their learning. The focus is placed on students mastering the standards as opposed to simply covering the material in a timely manner. In order to accomplish this objective, teachers consider the students' interests, previous achievements and development levels when planning the instructional methods. This approach creates a cooperative learning environment that

encourages students to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills.

Another aspect of a standards based classroom that is noticeably different is the flow of the lesson and instruction. After introducing the lesson, teachers will encourage additional in-depth conversations by pairing students with their peers or assigning small group activities. Students will also receive ongoing feedback through formal and informal assessments connected to the standards.

This type of learning can be seen in classrooms all around Georgia. Visit your child's classroom soon to enjoy a standards based classroom experience.

### Refocus After a Break

Following a school holiday - students, parents and teachers can use ideas to recharge and avoid the post-holiday slump.

- Create simple to-do lists to prioritize and avoid feeling overwhelmed
- Review goals for the rest of the school year
- Plan a fun family event for the near future
- Get involved at the school to stay active



## Program Staff

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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.

**Georgia Department of Education**

*Making Education Work For All Georgians!*

### 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!

**Remember to block off these important dates!**

**Visit the Zoo Day**  
December 26

**National Card Playing Day**  
December 28

**National Trivia Day**  
January 4

**Universal Letter Writing Week**  
January 8 - 14

**African American History Month**  
February

**Bicycle Safety Day**  
February 13

**World Thinking Day**  
February 22

### 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>