

Parent Engagement Newsletter



National Young Readers Week is November 12-16, 2012!

- Try to read for at least 15 minutes before going to sleep.
- Carry your favorite book in your backpack.
- Talk to your friends and family about the book you’re reading.
- Take your time! You don’t have to hurry when you’re reading for fun.
- Ask your parents, siblings and friends what books they like and recommend.



Dr. John D. Barge,
State School Superintendent

Welcome to the 2012-2013 school year! Most students have been in school now for well over a month. Many parents worked over the summer to prepare their children for a successful school year because we know that education begins at home.

At the Georgia Department of Education, our vision is simple – Making Education Work for All Georgians. We are focused on providing the highest level of learning for every student, in every classroom, at every school. Your partnership is essential to seeing this vision become a reality for every student. You can best accomplish this by ensuring that your child attends school every day, staying informed about your child’s progress in school and by remaining involved in your child’s school life as an advocate. Never underestimate the difference your involvement makes

in your child’s education.

In the weeks and months ahead, you will be hearing more about the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards and how you can support your school’s effort to implement these standards. I know that with your help, the transition will be smoother.

This is going to be an exciting and rewarding school year and I thank you for making learning a top priority in your home.

Sincerely,

State School Superintendent

Best GET INVOLVED Parent Moment...



There is no better way to inspire parents to get involved than by sharing other parents’ success stories. Last year, the GaDOE’s Parent Engagement Program began collecting and compiling such stories from parents. One story will be published in each quarterly newsletter to be shared statewide.

My best GET INVOLVED moment was when...

In January of 2000, I was overjoyed to hold my first-born; he was healthy and growing normally. However, when he turned two, I began to worry and talk to his doctor about his language development.

The doctor had told us that since we spoke several languages at home, it probably was taking him time to process, and that he would eventually catch up. The following year, he was enrolled in an early intervention program at Partee Elementary. He had to remain in Special Education because the school thought that he was not going to be able to read as soon as the other kids his age; in fact, they had said it would probably take him several years. During the summer of 2006, my child and I spent a lot of time reading. Once school started back up, my child could not only express himself but could read as well.

After some evaluations and meetings, my son was able to make the move from Special Education to the mainstream. He was transferred to Rosebud Elementary soon afterward.

Even after he was placed in general education, he still had to be pulled out of his classes for language instruction along with other resources. Day after day, I encouraged my son to work harder, I helped him prepare for the CRCT Exam and as a result, he did well and was not only promoted to 5th grade, but he is also taking *all* of his classes in general education with his peers.

Murinagie Nooy
Rosebud Elementary School



Middle School Matters!



Middle School Matters!



Many students transition to middle school each year and that means big changes for parents too! It is important to pave the way for a successful school year by becoming familiar with the new school, the new schedule and curriculum. Some schools have transition programs to help students and families understand what they should expect.

Transition programs are often effective because they can:

- ▶ Bridge the gap between schools, teachers and new families
- ▶ Relieve unnecessary anxiety for students and families

- ▶ Provide a positive and successful first impression
- ▶ Help students form a realistic outlook of what middle school will be like
- ▶ Respond to the needs and concerns of students



- ▶ Demonstrate an inviting, supportive and safe environment
- ▶ Provide multi-dimensional guidance and support

When transitioning to middle school, it is common for some students to struggle academically and feel less positive about their ability to do well in school. They often draw closer to their peers and are overwhelmed with the new expectations that confront them. The lack of skills and support needed to cope with these changes could have a negative effect on a student's ability to adjust. Learning what to expect in middle school can help prevent some of these setbacks. To learn more about how you can help your middle school student transition successfully, call 404-656-2633 to request copies of the new Middle School Matters brochure and obtain access to the school toolkit.

What is School Transition?

School transition is a process that prepares all partners - students, families, schools and communities - to develop knowledge, skills, and relationships that help students move from one educational setting to another. The transition from elementary to middle school is a change that impacts not only students, but also their families, school staff, and the community.



Developing Family-School-Community Partnerships

Developing effective family-school-community partnerships is one of the most important components linked to student achievement. During the month of November, Parent Engagement Month, seek opportunities to get the community involved in supporting student success. Some ways communities can help may be to:

- ▶ **Hold a Family and Community Engagement walk** that involves community partners, local political leaders, school personnel, and families in support of Parent Engagement Month.
- ▶ **Develop a Parent Engagement Pledge** that focuses on family, school, and community partnerships to benefit student success and hold a drive to secure family and community commitment to the pledge.
- ▶ **Design a Parent Engagement Month banner** and display it proudly in the center of your community.

- ▶ **Present an honorary award** to a local government official, local community leader, or parent advocate recognizing their level of involvement in enhancing parent engagement in education through community activism.
- ▶ **Start a community mentoring program** that not only mentors students at risk of not graduating, but also builds relationships with their families to support the entire family unit.
- ▶ **Write a local Parent Engagement Month proclamation!**

Parent and Teacher Relationships by Merritt Melancon

Most parents plan on seeing their child’s teacher only a few times a year at parent-teacher conferences. But building a relationship with your child’s teacher can improve your child’s performance during the school year.

Parents who have a working relationship with their children’s teachers can tackle problems with the child’s academic performance or behavior earlier and more effectively. “That relationship with a teacher is important, especially when a child is young,” said Diane Bales, a child development specialist with the University of Georgia College of Family and Consumer Sciences. “The teachers are sometimes the first people to see when a child is having difficulty and can alert parents to any problems.” One key to building an open conversation with your child’s teacher is to start talking at the beginning of the school year before any problems arise.

When a teacher has to tell a child’s parent that their child is misbehaving or falling behind, tensions can run high. That’s not the best time to start a relationship

with your child’s teacher.

“Don’t wait until something goes wrong to talk to your child’s teacher,” Bales said. She suggests meeting the teacher in person at the beginning of the year and then touching base regularly through a quick email or with a phone call.



If you feel your child is facing a hurdle in class or you have other serious concerns, set up an appointment to meet with the teacher. You don’t have to wait for the parent-teacher conference at the end of the grading period to have a conversation about your child.

When parent-teacher conference time does come around, make the most of it. Write down any questions or concerns you want to address and use that to guide the conversation.

Be prepared to share information about any life

changes that you or your child are going through during the school year — a move, a new sibling or a change in parents’ relationship can impact a child’s classroom performance.

“You don’t have to tell your whole life story, but give the basics about why your child might be upset so the teacher knows what’s going on,” Bales said.

Above all, don’t be defensive if your child’s teacher reaches out to you about a behavior problem or your child’s difficulties in class. Teachers sometimes have insight into children’s behaviors and academic performance that parents don’t. They also can help find your child the extra help or interventions they need to get back on track.

“A parent is the expert on their child, but teachers know, on average, what children are like and may spot problems before parents,” Bales said. “Parents may not notice that something is unusual; they are not around as many different children as teachers.”

Permission to reproduce: (Merritt Melancon is a news editor with the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.)



FAST FACT:

Parents who have strong relationships with their children’s teachers gain valuable insight into their children’s strengths and struggles in the classroom.



PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

It is vital to inform teachers, administrators and support staff about any allergies your child may have. Working with the school to develop a written plan that can protect your child in the classroom, cafeteria, playground or while participating in certain activities can alleviate stress and decrease the chance of a severe allergic reaction.

The questions below reflect some of the most common areas of parental concern.

Circle the questions you think you may want to ask your child’s teacher:

- ▶ How does my child’s work compare to the work of other students?
- ▶ Is my child enrolled in any supplemental classes, groups, or programs? Why?
- ▶ Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
- ▶ What programs are available if my child needs additional help in the content areas of mathematic, ELA, science and/or social studies?

Helping Your Children Develop Healthy Friendships

Research has found that many young people feel alone although they may be surrounded by their peers or "friends." As children transition from elementary school to middle school and beyond, meaningful friendships become an intricate part of their lives and can greatly impact their academic achievement, for better or worse. Parents can and should play a key role in helping their children develop meaningful friendships at school and in the community.

To no surprise, a major hindrance in developing meaningful relationships is the overuse of social media. While it has proven to be a

great resource for keeping in contact with friends and family, it has also created a barrier to obtaining meaningful friendships built on the solid foundation of trust and knowing a person for who they really are. It would be a good practice to create opportunities for your children to interact with their peers outside of school and in a personal setting. Inviting their friends over for a meal or planning weekend activities together can help them develop healthy, solid friendships. You can also model what a good friend is by your own interactions with your children. It is also important to be willing to

give your son or daughter constructive criticism when necessary because they cannot be expected to miraculously change negative character traits they are not told about.

When helping children evaluate who their true friends are, it would be good to ask them, do your friends help you reach your potential, or do you have to lower your standards to fit in with them? Ultimately, healthy friendships are those that make you grow and become a better person. Instilling those facts in your child will help them tremendously.

PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

Talking with your children about the positive experiences you had developing friendships when you were their age will lessen their anxiety and build confidence.



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Remember to block off these important dates!

National Family Day
September 24, 2012

Family Health & Fitness Day
September 29, 2012

World Teacher Day
October 5, 2012

National Bus Safety Week
October 15-19, 2012

Lights on After School
October 18, 2012

Red Ribbon Week
October 23-31, 2012

Parent Engagement Month
November, 2012

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
404-656-2800
askdoe@doe.k12.ga.us

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>