

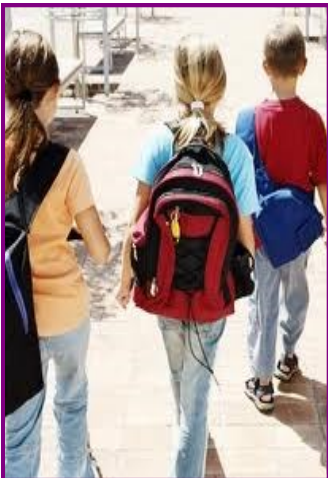
# Parent Engagement Newsletter



## How Was Your Day?

Every day parents ask their children how their day was at school. Consider asking some of these questions to learn even more about their school day.

- ◆ What did you like best about today?
- ◆ What's your homework plan for the day?
- ◆ What do your friends think of the new teacher?
- ◆ Was there anything that was really hard for you today?
- ◆ Did the teacher call on you today?
- ◆ You haven't mentioned math class lately, how's it going?
- ◆ Did your teacher explain that homework problem?



## Capturing the Excitement



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

*Dear Parents,*

It is my pleasure to welcome back students and their families for another exciting school year in Georgia. As schools open their doors around the state, it's fun to think back to my first days as a new teacher being handed the keys to my classroom with a fresh

student roster and a heavy stack of textbooks. The building hummed with energy and excitement as each student and educator arrived with a determination to achieve his/her personal best.

I invite parents and students across the state to capture that excitement from the first days of school and use it throughout this year to reach your personal best. Take some time to sit down with your child to develop goals for the year, including ways you can actively support and encourage your child's success. Use these goals throughout the year to remind your child to set high goals

and keep track of your child's progress.

When I travel to schools across the state during the back-to-school season, I enjoy seeing students who are eager to learn and reach new heights. I know we will see the same level of excitement for the coming year as we partner together to make education work for all Georgians.

Sincerely,

Dr. John D. Barge  
State School Superintendent

## Family Engagement in the Field: Stories of Success

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

### "It Only Takes A Few"

School is where children spend the majority of their time. It is the connection point between learning and growth. I realized the need to create opportunities for parents to be part of that connection. These opportunities allowed me to talk with parents to learn about their interests and concerns while encouraging them to engage other parents. These small connections led to stronger bonds throughout our school.

It starts by building relationships with parents. I

began with parents I knew from elementary school and the community. I showed them I was interested in not only the welfare of their children, but theirs as well. The key was to pair the parents' interests to the needs of our school.

At first there were only two or three parents who expressed any interest. One critical parent was worried about wasted spending in public schools, so I encouraged her to review the budget and give me suggestions. A retired grandmother volunteered to help her grandchild read. This led to her tutoring a small reading group, which inspired other parents to volunteer. This effort resulted in

increased reading comprehension scores across the school.

There was a time when the attendance at Open House was less than ten percent. Last night we saw over 1200 excited and engaged students and parents. More families come to our school each day, which means there are more opportunities to create new relationships.

- Tammy Johnson, Title I  
Parent Liaison  
Tapp Middle School

*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)*

## Exploring Georgia's New Career Clusters & Pathways



### Career Clusters/Pathways

- Advanced Academics
- Agriculture Food & Natural Resources
- Architecture & Construction
- Arts, Audio/Video Technology & Communications
- Business Management & Administration
- Education & Training
- Energy
- Finance
- Fine Arts
- Government & Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Correction & Security
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics
- World Languages



To better prepare all Georgia students for their future college and career plans, beginning in the Fall of 2013, all students starting high school will choose a pathway in one of 17 Career Clusters, or in the areas of Advanced Academics, Fine Arts or World Languages. Career Clusters are a grouping of occupations according to common knowledge and skills and the pathways are a connected sequence of academic or career and technical courses.

The classes are designed to ensure that high school is relevant for students by connecting the classroom material with their plans for

after high school. With the help of their parents, teachers, and school counselors, students choose their pathway based on what they want to do after graduation and take a core set of classes, either three or four, coupled with electives based on their chosen field. Depending on the options at the local school, students have the flexibility to switch pathways or clusters if they decide a particular area is not their passion or even complete more than one pathway during high school. The new courses approved this summer will keep students engaged and on the road to graduation.

The Georgia Department of Education has developed a

Student Plan of Study for each Career Cluster and pathway. In addition to ongoing student advisement, this document is a visual tool that can assist students and their families with high school course selections, postsecondary planning and other college and career planning options and decisions. The Student Plan of Study contains recommended coursework related to specific career paths, criteria for each pathway, as well as job market trends and important postsecondary information.

Visit the Career Cluster/ Pathway Resource Page to learn more information: <http://tinyurl.com/klnghu9>

## Raising a Good Digital Citizen

At home and at school, students are constantly being introduced to the latest trends and devices in the digital world. More and more, schools are relying on technology in the classrooms and encouraging students to access information online. As parents embrace the digital presence and role of technology in our lives and as we spend more time living in a digital world, what steps can parents take to educate and monitor their children to become good digital citizens?

Kids do not have to pass an exam or obtain a license to go online, but there are potential risks and hazards

just like driving a car. So, talk with your child about staying safe online and being responsible.

First, teach your child that not all websites are created equal by reviewing the actual address and looking for background information. Children should develop a critical eye for online information by reviewing the source and understanding the website's actual purpose.



Next, help your child understand the potential dangers of sharing personal information online as well as demonstrate how to establish privacy controls for protection. Explain that people can easily pretend to be someone else online so it is important to never trust sharing information with anyone on the Internet.

Finally, model appropriate behavior and use of the Internet for your child. Establish a schedule or set limits so your child understands that spending time online should not interfere with school work and other responsibilities or social activities.

## A Sneak Peak at the 2014 Family Engagement Conference

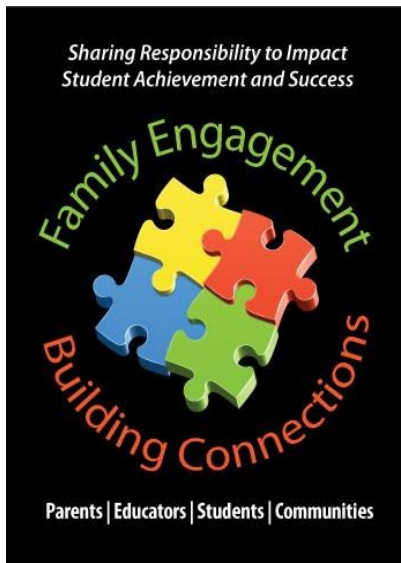
Those who attended the Family Engagement Conference in 2012 know that the upcoming conference in Athens on January 9 - 11, 2014 is one not to be missed! The theme this year is "Sharing Responsibility to Impact Student Achievement and Success" as we know that schools, parents and communities are all equally critical to helping improve student achievement. To that end, parents and families are strongly encouraged to begin planning now and register for this unique opportunity to learn many new ideas and strategies for building partnerships that model a shared responsibility for education. Therefore, keep reading to enjoy a brief glimpse at some of the highlights in the works for this year's conference.

The speakers for the 2014 Family Engagement Conference feature an exciting group of experts in the field of parent engagement from across the country. Attendees at the conference are guaranteed to be motivated and inspired by these featured speakers.



Dr. Steven Constantino is one of the nation's most sought-after speakers and innovative leaders in the field of education due to his unique success in the practical application of family

engagement research. Dr. Constantino is presently the Superintendent of Williamsburg-James City County School District in Virginia and the architect of "The Five Simple Principles to Engage Every Family™", a series of measurable standards that can help schools and districts worldwide increase the engagement of every family.



Ms. Michele Brooks, M.Ed. currently serves as the Assistant Superintendent for Family and Student Engagement for the Boston Public Schools. She is a parent activist, education organizer and advocate, whose work of empowering families and transforming engagement structures and policies of schools and districts spans over twenty years, including founding the first high school family center in a Boston Public School and as the founding director of the Boston Parent

Organizing Network.

Mr. Aric Bostick is one of the nation's leading motivational speakers inspiring educators, parents and students from around the country with his unique style and passionate message. Drawing from his own experience, Aric paints a picture of excitement and promise that empowers his audiences to believe that they can make a difference for each and every child. His riveting and educational presentations leave parents not only energized but well equipped to tackle the toughest job on the planet—being a parent.

Dr. Maria Paredes is a nationally recognized expert and leader in the field of family engagement and serves at the Senior Program Associate for the Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd in California. Dr. Paredes used her experience with teaching, research and her deep understanding of the community to create a model family-engagement framework—Academic Parent-Teacher Teams that has produced remarkable results for students, parents, and teachers.



For more information on these fascinating speakers and other updates on the Family Engagement Conference, visit our website: <http://tinyurl.com/kf3hoh8>



### Get INVOLVED!

In 2011, the number of volunteers reached its highest level in 5 years! 64.3 million Americans volunteered approximately 7.9 billion hours. Set a goal for your family to volunteer and help make your community a better place!



### DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that student involvement in extracurricular activities is positively associated with success in school including consistent attendance, academic achievement and aspirations for continuing education beyond high school. Find out if your child's school offers any of the following programs:

- ▶ Publications
- ▶ Performing Arts
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Honor Societies
- ▶ Student Government
- ▶ Academic Clubs
- ▶ Professional Clubs
- ▶ Service Clubs
- ▶ Hobby Clubs

# Solving the Motivation Formula

**F**iguring out what motivates our children academically can be as challenging as solving an advanced calculus problem. There is danger in simply blaming a student's poor performance on a lack of motivation. Remember there are athletic teams, socializing with friends, fashion trends, music and even video games competing for your child's attention. Therefore, solving the motivation formula can sometimes be a simple matter of addition and subtraction.

Encourage your child's interest in school by emphasizing the successes

and creating additional opportunities for them to have positive experiences. Give praise for their efforts not just their achievements.

Also try to reduce or minimize the distractions and possible negative beliefs about school that your child sees or hears.

Use the following tips from the National Association of School Psychologists to encourage your child to be excited about learning and build an interest in school.

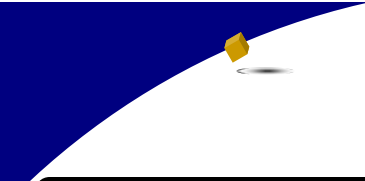
- Maintain a set routine for school work
- Plan family activities that

encourage learning, such as visits to the library, museums, or parks

- Avoid excessive rewards as they cause children to undervalue their accomplishments alone
- Praise your child for both trying hard and for being successful
- Limit things that interfere with learning
- Talk with your child about career interests and how school is related to a career
- Tell your child that you think learning is important

**Parents**, help your child succeed in school this year with these study strategies for you and your child.

- ◇ Create a quiet study zone
- ◇ Keep a calendar for all assignments and tests
- ◇ Review notes and handouts on a daily basis
  - ◇ Show an ongoing excitement and interest towards school
- ◇ Communicate with the teacher on a regular basis



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

**Hispanic Heritage Month**  
September 15—October 15

**National Family Day**  
September 23

**Family Health & Fitness Day**  
September 28

**World Teacher Day**  
October 5

**National Stop Bullying Day**  
October 9

**Walk to School Day**  
October 9

**National Red Ribbon Week**  
October 23—31

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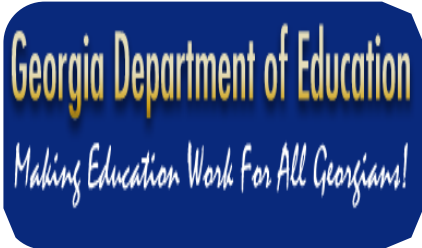
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**Vision Statement**

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!

**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>