

*“Successfully Engaging Georgia’s Parents”*

# PARENT ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2014

## *“HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION”*

Like most parents in Georgia, it is important for me to know what my child is learning in school and to monitor her progress throughout the year. As a parent of a high school senior, I especially want to see that my child is receiving a rigorous education that will prepare her for post-secondary plans. While the countless nights spent reading to my child may be a distant memory, I am still able to find other ways to be active in her education. One of the best ways for parents to be involved

is to stay informed of the latest educational news.

As State School Superintendent, I have the opportunity to share news and updates with parents about education in Georgia. Many parents may not know that Georgia was recently ranked 17th in the nation for K-12 Achievement by Education Week’s 2014 Quality Counts Survey, which measures scores on national exams, graduation rates and improvement over time. While

there is still room for growth, it is encouraging to see our schools showing great progress and moving in the right direction. This good news is a reflection of the outstanding teachers and staff in our schools, as well as the support and hard work of parents like you.

With this news of encouraging progress for Georgia’s public schools, I ask that you continue being involved and informed parents – I know that I will!

*-DR. JOHN D. BARGE, STATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT*



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN THE FIELD

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

*Stories of Success*

### *“Returning to Greatness”*

The last three years have been a time of hard work, dedication, and commitment for the parents, students, faculty and staff at Kendrick High School. We faced an uphill struggle to improve student achievement and increase our graduation rate, but we did not face this struggle alone. Parental input and involvement were an essential part in changing the school culture and returning Kendrick to greatness.

After listening to concerns from parents, we realized that a lack of communication between the school and parents was creating a barrier. When school-family communication improves, parents become better informed which leads to a greater understanding of the school and ways they can support their students. Most

importantly, we focused on improving positive and two-way communications with parents. Therefore, we sent parents weekly emails notifying them about upcoming events as well as postcards sharing good news about the academic achievements of their students. Parents were also provided the opportunity to receive helpful information and participate in conversations with staff members at all school events and activities.

Thanks to the voice of our families, we realized that there was a communication problem. When parents use their voices, schools can gain new insight and ideas to solve a common problem. Through teamwork, we provided our parents, students, and the local community

the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations to improve student achievement. Now we see families and students take pride in their school. As a result of this team effort, we are proud of the fact that our graduation rate has increased by 12.9% as we continue to work to return Kendrick High School to greatness.

**Angela Fontain**  
Family Services Coordinator  
Kendrick High School  
Muscogee County

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

## WHAT'S INSIDE

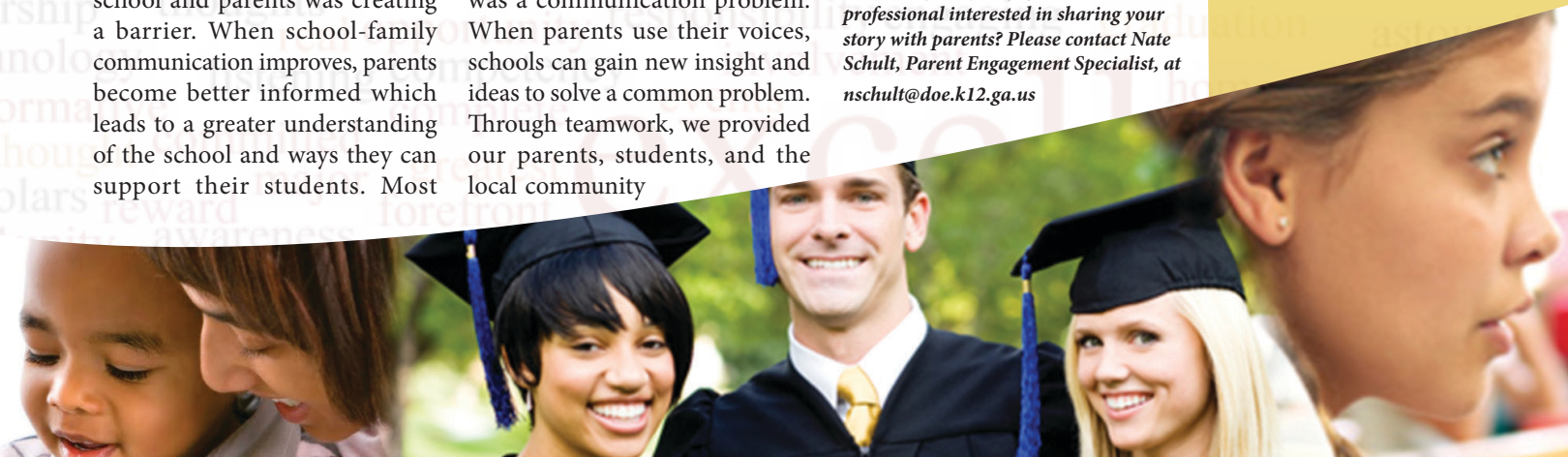
*The CRCT, EOCT and Other Tests Your Child May Take this Spring 2*

*Encouraging Your Child to Read 2*

*High Expectations: Why Setting Them Can be Engaging Enough 3*

*Signs Your Child May Be a Victim of Bullying 3*

*Save the Dates 4*



# THE CRCT, EOCT

## AND OTHER TESTS YOUR CHILD MAY TAKE THIS SPRING

Springtime. The season when the leaves are returning to the trees, flowers are beginning to bloom... and students are preparing for standardized testing. With all of the excitement that the warmer weather brings, it might also bring anxiety and stress to your child due to the tests that are looming in the air. Here are three common tests that are given in the springtime along with resources you can use to help prepare your child to take them.



### Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) - Grades 1 - 8

The CRCT is a state test that is designed to measure how well students acquire the state mandated skills and knowledge. This information is used to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses as well as assess the overall quality of education throughout the state of Georgia. The CRCT gives students an opportunity to show what they have learned in school as well as providing teachers with information that helps them plan instruction.

For more information and CRCT study guides and resources visit the DOE's CRCT page at <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/CRCT.aspx>.

\*A CRCT-Modified (CRCT-M) test specifically tailored for special needs students is also

available. For more information and CRCT-M study guides and resources visit the DOE's CRCT-M page at <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/CRCT-M.aspx>

### End of Course Test (EOCT) - High School

The EOCT serves as a student's final exam in the associated course. These tests help to improve performance in all academic areas by assessing specific content knowledge and skills. These assessments provide information to help students identify their strengths as well as areas of weakness. These tests also provides data to evaluate the effectiveness of classroom instruction at the school system and state levels.

For more information and EOCT study guides and resources visit the DOE's EOCT page at <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/EOCT.aspx>

### Writing Assessments - Grades 3, 5, 8, 11

Statewide writing assessments serve the purpose of improving writing and writing instruction. These writing assessments were established in an effort to create a way to accurately assess student development and enhance statewide instruction in the language arts. The writing assessments provide information to students about their writing performance and areas of strength as well as areas where they face challenges.

This information is useful for instruction and preparation for future writing assessments. For more information and Writing Assessment study guides and resources visit the DOE's Writing Assessments page at <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Writing-Assessments.aspx>

### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD?

- Encourage your child to employ good study and test-taking skills.
- Explain the purpose of the tests.
- Encourage them to try his or her best.
- Reassure your child that there will be ample time to take the tests and that it is okay if he or she does not know all the answers.
- Be certain your child gets a good night's rest and a nutritious breakfast and lunch.
- Make sure your child is at school on time.
- Remember to ask your child about the testing at the end of each day.

For the full list of tests and accompanying resources, please visit the DOE's Testing/Assessment page at: <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/default.aspx>

## ENCOURAGING YOUR CHILD TO READ!

Kids say that their biggest reason for not wanting to read is because they can't find any books that interest them. Of course, this isn't because there is a lack of books on the market, but rather it is likely due to a lack of exposure. Often times, the only contact a child has with a book are the textbooks that they use in school, which they associate with work. Although educators try their best to encourage reading, the bulk of the responsibility of igniting a child's love for reading lies with the parents.

Countless studies have been conducted on how children learn to read, and yet the myth



still exists that reading is a natural process that students just 'catch' on to. However, the fact remains that the only way for a child's reading to improve is to practice and read more!

As a parent, you can take your child to the library or bookstore and let them wander the aisles. Introduce them to subjects that they never knew of. Whether it is science

fiction, biographies, or even poetry– find out what interests them and pile it on! And remember to be a good reading role model. Children mimic their parents. If they see you constantly reading, they are more likely to read themselves.

To find books your kids will love try [Readkiddoread.com](http://Readkiddoread.com) or [Oprah.com](http://Oprah.com) Kids Reading List!

# HIGH EXPECTATIONS: WHY SETTING THEM CAN BE ENGAGING ENOUGH

03

In this day and age with one or both parents working full-time jobs outside of the household, it can be a struggle for a parent to find the time to be engaged in their child's school life. Although helping with homework and volunteering at your child's school are great examples of parent involvement, a parent does not always have to employ such traditional methods to be effective. Simply expressing high academic expectations has proven to be an effective way for parents to become engaged and research shows that high expectations in school lead to high performance.

According to a recent study at the Harvard Family Research Project, "Parents who hold high expectations... communicate them clearly, and encourage their adolescents to work hard in order to attain them, can make a difference in students' success."

While teachers and in-school staff do their best to foster and encourage student achievement, this can not and does not replace the role the parent must play to motivate and reinforce high academic standards in their child. A parent can

*"Children respond to an atmosphere of high standards... they sense when we have faith in them and they love to justify that faith."*

**-Former President George W. Bush**

encourage student achievement in their child in the following ways:

**Help Your Child Set Goals** – Be involved in helping your child set specific goals. The state standards (which you can find here: <https://www.georgiastandards.org/Standards/Pages/BrowseStandards/BrowseGPS.aspx>) are a good place to start.

**Be Susceptible to Change** – As your child grows and changes, be willing to reassess their capabilities, and set goals that are attainable yet still challenge them.

**Maintain a Positive Attitude** – If your child is working on science homework and you



happen to hate science, don't show it. By conveying to your child that you dislike something because it is difficult, this will show them that it is okay to adopt a negative attitude toward more challenging subjects and discourage them into not trying.

**Celebrate Successes** – Make an effort to constantly reward and encourage good grades – this will motivate them to continue to excel in school!

## SIGNS YOUR CHILD MAY BE A VICTIM OF BULLYING

Not all children who are bullied ask for help. Recognizing the warning signs is an important first step in taking action against bullying. Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries; lost or destroyed possessions
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of

social situations

- Feelings of helplessness or low self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors

For information on what you can do to stop bullying visit <http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-you-can-do/parents/index.html>

And if you suspect your child is being bullied, please visit the DOE's Bullying Prevention Toolkit webpage at: <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Bullying-Prevention-Toolkit.aspx> for more information and resources.

From [stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)

*According to NBC News, 1 in 6 children are regularly bullied.*

## 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!*

# 2014 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE

## Inspiration Station

Over 1,200 parents, community partners, and educators gathered at the Classic Center in Athens, GA for the 2014 Family Engagement Conference. Throughout the 3-day conference, white boards were posted in different locations within the Conference. Attendees were encouraged to write thoughts and messages on what inspired them throughout the conference. We received hundreds of replies, here are a select few...

**Be the sun-  
shine in the  
life of a child.**

Parent leadership is necessary!

**BE POSITIVE!** ☺

Make your school a  
welcome school!!

SHOW YOU CARE! CARING MATTERS!

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY OR TOO LATE TO  
MAKE A CHANGE. BE A LEADER!

*I will make a difference  
in someone's life everyday!*

PARENTS ARE THE KEY!

TELL CHILDREN THEY ARE IMPORTANT!

Family Engagement is the center for strong student success!

TELL PARENTS THEY ARE NEEDED!

**MARCH 14, 2014**

**International Ask a Question Day**

– this day encourages parents to sit down with their children and allow them to ask questions about topics of interest.

**APRIL 24, 2014**

**Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work**

**Day** – this program was created to inform the future generation of young boys and girls about the variety of career paths they can take.

**MAY 3, 2014**

**National Scrapbooking Day** – this day invites scrap bookers all over the country to celebrate their passion for scrapbooking! Parents can teach their children how to scrapbook on this day.



**MAY 6, 2014**

**National Teacher Day** – this day focuses on teachers who make public schools a great place for students to achieve and soar. This day honors and recognizes our teachers for the contributions they make to our children and families.

## Program Staff

**Michelle Sandrock,**  
Parent Engagement  
Program Manager  
msandrock@doe.k12.ga.us  
404-232-1148

**Nathan Schult,**  
Parent Engagement  
Specialist  
nshult@doe.k12.ga.us  
404-463-1956

**Keisha Jeffries,**  
Parent Engagement  
Communications Specialist  
kjeffries@doe.k12.ga.us  
404-656-2633

## 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.*

*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>

