Parent Engagement Newsletter

Perseverance in Education

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

With the end of the school year approaching rapidly, many of you are making plans for your child's summer vacation activities. Like most parents, you know that while the summer months are a welcome opportunity for fun and relaxation, the lag in learning causes many students to struggle when they return to school in the fall. I urge you to take advantage of the summer months by encouraging your child to read - instead of endless hours of television and video games. Stimulating activities like reading during the summertime will help improve your child's literacy and critical thinking skills as he or she prepares for the coming school year. We are constantly looking for innovative ways to make education work for all Georgians, and we simply cannot succeed without parents and families. Research proves that involvement in your child's education has a dramatic impact on student achievement and a school's environment and culture. As you set goals for the next school year, please consider ways you can be more active in your child's school. Join the PTA, serve on your school's improvement team or be that critical parent voice at school board meetings.

Thank you for all that you do for your children. Your support and input are critical to our success as a state.

Sincerely,

John D. Barge

Dr. John D. Barge
State School Superintendent

SAVE THE DATE!
January 9-11, 2014

The Parent Engagement Program is excited to announce the second statewide family engagement conference, Building Connections: Sharing Responsibility to Impact Student Achievement and Success. Parents, educators and community members are invited to attend. Please talk to your PIC for more details. This event will be held in Athens, GA at the Classic Center. Registration will open August, 2013.

Sharing Responsibility to Impact Student Achievement and Success

**Family Engagement
Building Connections**

Parents | Educators | Students | Communities

Best GET INVOLVED Parent Moments...

September 17, 2012 was Math Night at Pearl Stephens Elementary School. Everything was so different compared to when I was in school years ago and my daughter, whose in the second grade, was trying to explain everything to me. The Math Night was a lot of fun and helped me to get a better understanding of the new math requirements. Now my daughter and I are able to work so much better together when I'm helping her with her homework. Thanks PSES and keep up the good training!

-Sonja Bean,
Pearl Stephens Elementary

My best GET INVOLVED moment was the summer before my daughter entered kindergarten. We were given a list of site words that the students would need to know when they entered school in the fall. The focus on teaching and learning these words became a family assignment. We made flash cards and hung them all around the house. We looked for those sight words in books and other places. We even set up a reward system when new words were learned. My daughter really enjoyed this process. The best moment for me came when we formed sentences with the sight words and my daughter was able to read the sentences! That was a great moment– the coolest ever!

-Willie Thorpe, Shirley Hills Elementary School

Parents, we would love to hear from you! Please submit your Best GET INVOLVED Moment to the Parent Involvement Coordinator at your school or you can submit your story electronically to nschult@doe.k12.ga.us. Make sure that your story provides details of the event, including what happened and who was involved, as well as explains why it was your best GET INVOLVED moment.

The Lexile Framework for Reading

Supporting the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards

LEXILE®

A Parent's Guide to
The Lexile Framework®
for Reading

Georgia Department of Education
Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Marking Education Work for All Georgians"   www.gadoe.org

5 FAMILY FUN ACTIVITIES FOR THIS SUMMER

1. Visit the zoo and see some of the animal exhibitions.
2. Go to a nearby water park or amusement park for the day.
3. Have a water balloon fight to cool off.
4. Make sidewalk art with colorful chalk.
5. Go bike riding together.

Georgia's focus on improving early reading skills and increasing adolescent literacy includes a new resource for parents and educators, the Lexile Framework for Reading. Lexile measures rank the reading level of a student and the difficulty of text that they are capable of mastering. The ranking is linked to scores on the Georgia Criterion Reference Competency Test (CRCT) and the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) in grades 3-12. Teachers and library media specialists use Lexile measures to select texts that are likely to improve the reading and comprehension skills of students, and parents are encouraged to do the same.

Students are more comfortable when they read texts that match their Lexile level. Using Lexile measures, parents can help their children select reading materials that will help them develop stronger reading skills. Parents can also use Lexile information to select texts that reinforce what teachers are trying to accomplish in the classroom. It is important to note that the Lexile measure does not address the content or quality of the text. Many other factors affect the relationship between a reader and a text, including its content, the age and interests of the reader, and the design of the actual text. The Lexile measure is a good starting point in the text-selection process, but parents should always consider these other factors when making a decision about which text to choose.

The Georgia *Lexile Framework Map* provides a sampling of titles with corresponding Lexile levels. The framework illustrates how Lexiles can be used to support students and to monitor students' progress as they learn to become better readers. Additional book titles have been measured on the Lexile scale and can be found under "Look up a Book" on **www.georgiastandards. org**. Please note that the books listed are not endorsed or recommended by the Georgia Department of Education.

Communicate regularly with your child's teacher and library media specialist about his or her reading needs and accomplishments. When a reading assignment proves too challenging for your child, use activities to help. For example, prior to reading the text, review the words and definitions in the glossary and then review the questions at the end of a chapter. Afterwards, be sure to return to the glossary and review the questions to make sure your child understood the material. Celebrate your child's reading accomplishments. One of the great things about the Lexile Framework is that it provides an easy way for readers to keep track of their own growth and progress. You and your child can set goals for reading such as:

► Sticking to a reading schedule

► Reading a book at a higher Lexile measure

► Trying new categories of books and articles

► Reading a certain number of pages per week

When your child reaches the goal, make an occasion out of it. This will motivate them to continue! Ultimately, by using Lexile measures to help your child become a better reader, you can help promote reading achievement and adolescent literacy.

For more information on how Lexile measures can help to improve your child's reading ability and to obtain a copy of the brochure "A Parent's Guide to The Lexile Framework for Reading", visit **www.gadoe.org/ lexile.aspx**
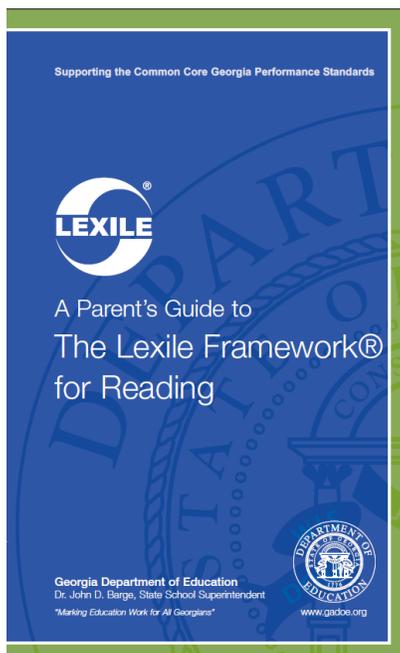
Georgia 4-H Helps Build Leadership Through its Step Up and Lead Program by Melanie Biersmith and Mandy B. Marable

Learning how to lead is often the best way for students to graduate high school with the skills needed to succeed in college and beyond.

For the past two years, Georgia 4-H and the Georgia Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals have been teaming up to cultivate leadership skills in Georgia's younger students by organizing "Step Up and Lead" conferences across the state.

So far, 1,500 elementary and middle school students have developed core leadership competencies by attending the conferences, and organizers plan to continue the program this coming school year.

During a Step Up and Lead conference, 4-H teen leaders and 4-H faculty and staff work together to help teach younger children how to cultivate their leadership skills through a series of interactive workshops and peer presentations.

The first workshop in the series, "Taking a Step Towards Powerful Presentations," is designed to allow students the opportunity to develop and deliver a short presentation. Workshop facilitators focus on teaching students how to structure their work.

While the presenters learn a valuable lesson about public speaking and effective communication, students in the audience learn how to provide constructive

feedback to their peers, as they discuss the effectiveness of their classmates' presentations.

The skills that students learn in the first workshop provide the groundwork for the second workshop, "Teamwork, Leadership and What's in Between." Here participants learn the importance of communication and teamwork in problem solving.

Workshop facilitators guide the students through a variety of exercises that require the group to work together to find a practical solution.

Between every exercise the participants have a chance to reflect upon their experience and discuss the ways their team worked together and communicated with one another. The participants often find that having a plan and being able to effectively communicate it helps the team find a solution to the problem.

In the third workshop, "Mapping Our Plan," students hone their planning skills by organizing a mock event. They use what they've learned about communication and problem solving to identify the steps they need to take to put on the event, how to allocate the resources they have and how to delegate responsibilities throughout the group. They also establish a production timeline for the event, and then they present their event plan to their classmates.

Georgia 4-H Extension specialists plan to continue the leadership program during the 2013-2014 school year. They plan to hold six Step Up and Lead conferences at different locations around the state. Parents wanting to involve their children in this leadership program or other Georgia 4-H activities should visit georgia4h.org/gaesp.

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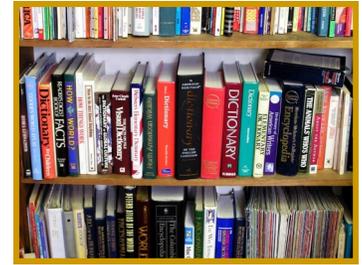
FAST FACT:
Research has shown that children who are read to, and who read for pleasure, are significantly more successful in school.

READING REMINDERS FOR PARENTS THIS SUMMER

► Encourage reading everyday.

► Challenge your child to read from a variety of book categories, including fairy tales, song books, poems, and information books.

► Stimulate conversations about the book or publication being read by asking thought provoking questions.

► Work together to establish a weekly goal for the number of books your child should read.

What are AP Courses and How Does My Child Benefit?

Advanced Placement courses are college-level courses offered by trained high school teachers in the regular high school setting. In recent years, over one-third of the students in Georgia's public high schools were enrolled in AP courses. AP courses guarantee rigor in your child's classrooms. The high school teachers who offer AP courses are trained by The College Board to offer the course at a college-level and have a syllabus approved by The College Board. AP courses are challenging and require significant study time on a daily basis. Assessments in these classes require sophisticated critical thinking skills. In May of each year, AP students take the AP exam. Students who score at the 3, 4 or 5 level may be able to earn college credit for these courses taken in the high school. Policies for credit differ from college to college, so take care to check college admissions and credit policies. Development committees meet throughout the year to create new exams, each of which may contain a free-response section, either in essay form or problem solving, and/or a section of multiple-choice questions.

The multiple-choice questions are scored by a computer, while the free-response portions are evaluated by a team of skilled college professors and high school teachers who meet annually to score exams in their subject area. The involvement of college faculty at all levels of exam development and scoring ensures that the AP exams truly reflect college-level achievement. One huge benefit to students who perform well in these classes and on these exams is that they can receive course credit and advanced standing at thousands of universities worldwide.

Check with your counseling department to learn which AP courses are offered in your high school. Some of these may include:

► US History
► Calculus AB
► Physics B
► Chemistry
► Statistics

Visit the official AP website APCentral at
http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/ apc/Controller.jpf to learn more!

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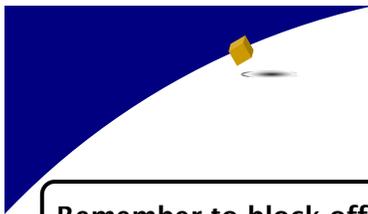
Remember to block off these important dates!

National Bike to Work Week
May 14-18, 2013

World Environment Day
June 5, 2013

National Culinary Arts Month
July, 2013

International Joke Day
July 1, 2013

Independence Day
July 4, 2013

International Picnic Day
July 18, 2013

National Cheesecake Day
July 30, 2013

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