

*“Successfully Engaging Georgia’s Parents”*

# PARENT ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2014

## *“FINAL STEPS TOWARD NEW BEGINNINGS”*

As the end of the school year approaches, several annual traditions are observed in schools across the state. It starts with the ritual of taking down bulletin boards, followed by the collection of textbooks after final exams, and of course, the much-celebrated high school graduation ceremony. It is an exciting time of year for the entire family to reflect upon accomplishments and look forward to new opportunities.

For many parents, the high school diploma represents countless nights studying flashcards, unexpected

trips to the store for last minute school supplies, and valuable advice about the benefits of an education. It also represents the teacher who stayed after school to tutor students who were not even in her class, the principal who fought to offer more college and career courses, and the counselor who encouraged students to discover their true passions. When students walk across the stage to receive their diplomas, they are taking the first steps toward exciting opportunities and the beginning of a new chapter in their lives. For the accomplishments it represents

and the possibilities it provides, that high school diploma is priceless.

As we continue to make education work for all Georgians and watch more high school seniors walk across that stage every year, I applaud the proud parents and families as well the outstanding teachers and staff who make those moments possible. Please enjoy this time with your family, and I wish everyone a safe and refreshing summer.



*-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*

### *“Listening with Understanding”*

While sorting through a box of old photographs, I discovered a newspaper article from 1981 that featured a former student from one of my kindergarten classes. The article referred to me as a teacher and parent coordinator, which made me remember how much I have learned from parents and students during my 27 years in education. Over this period of time, my dedication to them sparked during my first year of teaching and the flames have continued to burn brightly.

One lesson that I have learned from parents is the importance of sincerely listening to families’ needs, opinions, and concerns. A good listener can be more valuable than all the parent engagement strategies and educational acronyms combined. While parent programs and activities are extremely important, listening first always provides me with helpful information to better assist families. Their input

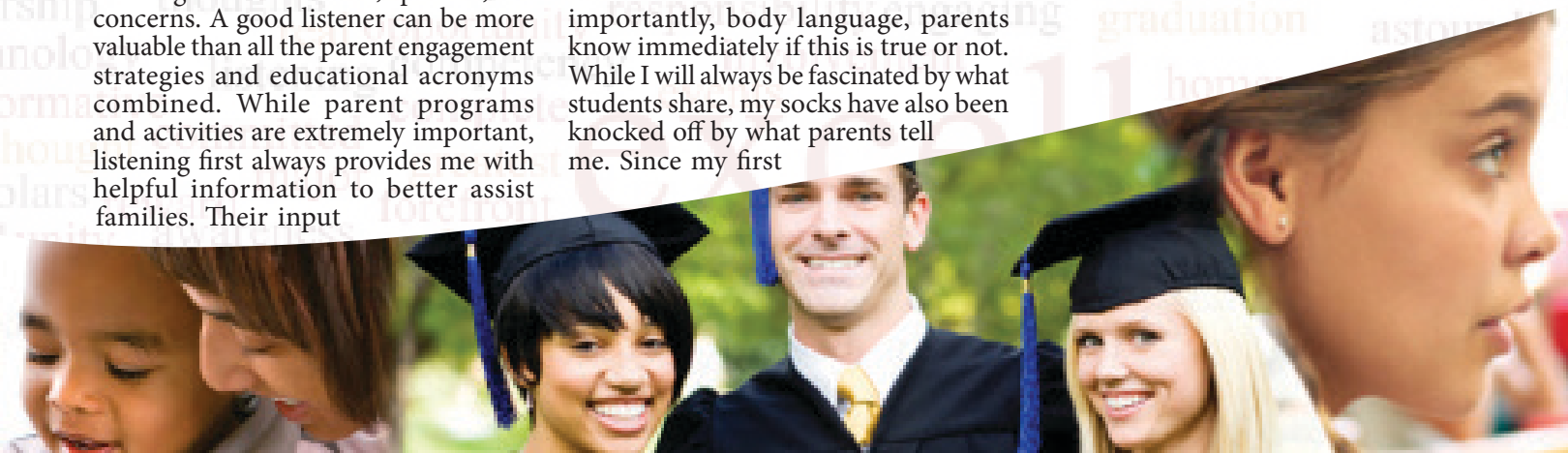
allows me to address their individual and often specific needs concerning their child’s education. If schools and parents are to be true partners, then why are we always talking? After all, two-way communication is not just about creating opportunities for parents to share, but ensuring that schools are listening.

Listening to parents with compassion and understanding does not always mean that you will be in agreement, but it does mean that you want to recognize and appreciate their story. Parents want schools to value their children and to believe that they are capable of learning. Based on words and sometimes more importantly, body language, parents know immediately if this is true or not. While I will always be fascinated by what students share, my socks have also been knocked off by what parents tell me. Since my first

year, I continue to learn what parents really want from teachers and schools. After listening with understanding, I have been educated by the best, parents.

**Linda Cooke**  
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*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)*



Congratulations to the four schools selected as the 2014 winners of the Georgia Department of Education's Family-Friendly Partnership School Award!

These schools were selected because they represent the best in customer service for Georgia families, whether it's on the phone, in the front office or online.

They have welcoming staff members, comfortable waiting areas, clear signage, and engaging student work throughout the building. Additionally, they have easy-to-navigate websites and are forging partnerships with

# THE GEORGIA FAMILY FRIENDLY PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL AWARDS

Congratulations  
**Cumming Elementary School**  
**Golden Isles Elementary School**  
**Midway Elementary School**  
**Moreland Elementary School**

parents to help improve student achievement.

These four schools provide unique, engaging, and innovative parent engagement programming that is successful in reaching all families in the school.

The Family-Friendly Partnership School Award is sponsored by the GaDOE, along with the Georgia Foundation for Public Education, Georgia Association of Educator and the Ritz-Carlton. This award is given out annually to up to 10 schools that go above and beyond to make families feel welcome and work to engage parents in their children's education.

## JUNE 5, 2014

**World Environment Day** – this day is used by the United Nations to stimulate worldwide awareness of environmental issues and encourages preventative action to keep our environment clean and sustainable.

## JUNE 14, 2014

**Flag Day** – this is a day of patriotism, so parents can take the opportunity to hang or display their native flag on their lawns with their children.

## JUNE 18, 2014

**International Picnic Day** – this day encourages everyone to break out the blankets and Tupperware containers to enjoy a family picnic!



## JULY 1, 2014

**International Joke Day** – this day gives parents and children an opportunity to share laughter together by telling their favorite jokes.

## 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.*

## Have a Question?

AskDOE

404-656-2800 ❖ [askdoe@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:askdoe@doe.k12.ga.us)

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