

*“Successfully Engaging Georgia’s Parents”*

# PARENT ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2014

## *“LET’S CONTINUE TO PLAY A ROLE”*

The last few years have been exceptional for Georgia’s students. High school graduation rates have increased, more Georgia students are taking and passing Advanced Placement (AP) exams, and Georgia is exceeding the nation in growth in both participation rates and passing rates on those exams. This level of progress is impossible to achieve without active and engaged parents supporting our students and teachers.

I have always believed that parent engagement is paramount for student success. After traveling all over

Georgia and witnessing firsthand the impact engaged parents have on students, that belief is stronger than ever. I was honored to participate in the “I CAN Play a Role” campaign launch last month at the state capitol and to join with thousands of parents across the state pledging to play a role in their child’s education.

This spring, I watched my daughter accept her high school diploma. I cannot express how thankful I was, as she walked across the stage, to have played a role in her education through the years. Parents, my wish for you is to experience the joy of

that moment. I want you to have the pleasure of watching your children succeed in school and reach their highest potential.

I want to thank you for giving me the great honor and privilege of serving the students and parents of this state. I look to the future of education in Georgia with great optimism because I know our parents and families are dedicated to playing a role in the success of our students. I wish you and your family a happy and healthy holiday season!

*-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*

#### *“What Can We Do?”*

As a district parent involvement coordinator, I work with our Title I schools to ensure that parents know to become a valuable part of their child’s academic success. The question often arises from parents, “What can I do?”. In elementary school, parents and families are coming to the school on a regular basis. By middle school, parents may not be as visible, but they are still attending meetings and programs. Unfortunately by high school, parent engagement is limited as parents often feel that they do not need to be as involved anymore.

How do we get parents engaged at all levels? First, we listen to what they have to say. All of the schools in my district are school-wide Title I, so it is important that we listen to our parents and get their input about the programs and activities. Surveys are such a critical tool in understanding the needs of our parents and families and to improve the opportunities for parents to be

involved. We realized that some parents do not have positive school experiences; therefore, holding meetings and workshops away from the school campus became a major objective. We must go out into the homes and community to meet our parents and talk with them. Parents, you are a vital part to maximizing academic achievement.

Secondly, we want our parents to be comfortable and not feel intimidated by school personnel. I have never met a parent or family member who did not want their child to be successful, but some may not feel comfortable asking for help or know how to provide assistance. One way schools can be less intimidating is to use language that is understandable and avoid education jargon. As educators, we live in a world of acronyms and sometimes forget that people outside of the school do not use these terms. In order for parents to help their child

succeed, it is our responsibility as educators to provide parents with the right information.

As parents, what can you do? Do not be afraid to ask your child’s school and teacher questions. Be sure to communicate frequently with the school’s parent involvement coordinator. Voice your concerns by completing surveys, providing feedback and attending meetings or workshops. Most importantly, get involved in your child’s school.

**Mary Ann King**  
District Parent Involvement  
Coordinator  
Ware County School District

*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)*

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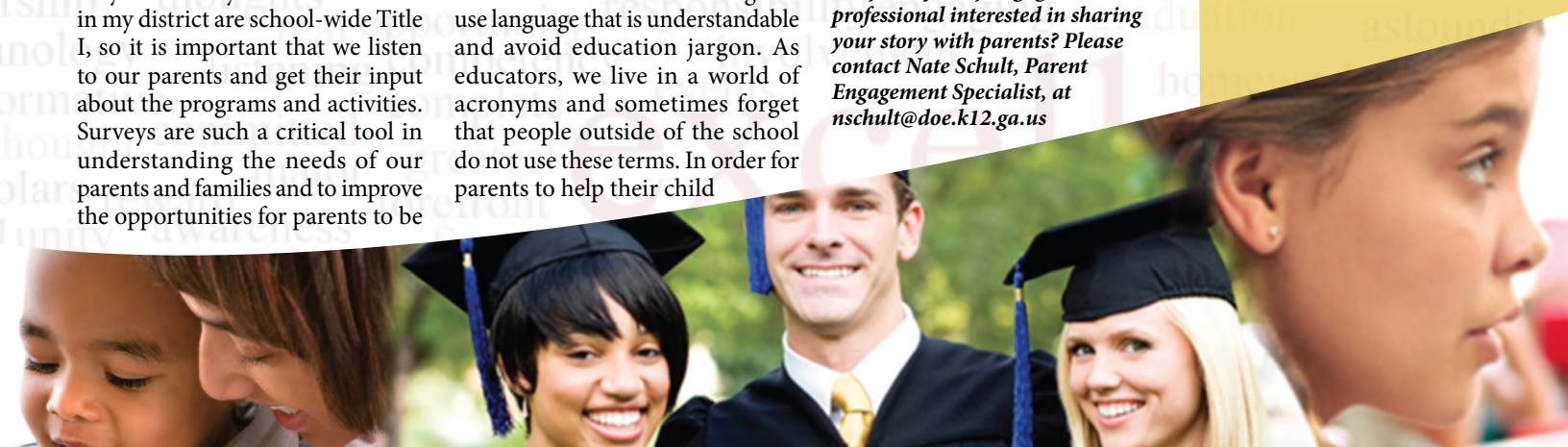
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# Is YOUR CHILD STRUGGLING IN SCHOOL?



School is one of the most important things in a child's life. It is where they learn, build social connections, and gain important life skills. School should also be a place that your student is happy to attend. Even if they do not come home eager to recount all of the details of their day or they *still* require multiple wake-up calls before finally rolling out of bed in the morning - their general attitude towards school should still be a positive one.

However, it is rare for a child to go from kindergarten to 12th grade without experiencing some sort of growing pains. When your child displays changes in behavior such as becoming unmotivated, withdrawn, or rebellious, it can be a sign that they are struggling academically, socially, or emotionally at school.

As a parent, it is important to monitor your student's temperament towards school and decipher when there could be a potential problem. Trust your gut and don't brush off legitimate warning signs as a 'phase'. Often parents are convinced that their child will 'grow out of it' when in fact their parental attention is needed. Here are a few things to consider if you suspect your child is struggling in some capacity in school.

### ***Struggling academically***

If your child, who was once an A or B student, suddenly begins to bring home C's and D's, that is a warning sign that you should not ignore. In the event your child is struggling academically, their teacher is

your first and best line of defense. Contact them to schedule a meeting to discuss a plan of action for getting your student back on track, and be sure to ask for any materials that you can utilize at home to build upon your child's skills. Educators are experts, and reaching out and voicing your concerns enables them to guide you and your child toward the best course of action.

### ***Struggling socially***

Humans are biologically social creatures, and both adults and children naturally seek social acceptance. This is especially true in school-age children. Research has shown that children who experience rejection from their peers at a young age are most at risk of dropping out of high school. On the contrary, children who feel accepted by their peers are more likely to do well academically. Unfortunately, some children do not easily pick up on social cues and might need a little extra help making friends. If you feel your child is struggling socially, don't be afraid to offer them advice on how to make friends, arrange a play date, or encourage them to join a club or other activity. Additionally, be sure to check in with your child's teacher and inform them of your concerns. They will most likely be able to provide suggestions and help you maintain a healthy barometer on your child's social well-being.

### ***Struggling emotionally***

Children and teenagers mature at various paces, and it is important to be mindful of your child's emotional development.

According to a study conducted by Yale University, emotional intelligence can play a vital role in a person's academic and professional success. Emotional issues include tolerance for getting frustrated, angered, or upset and can be a major hindrance in a child's ability to focus and learn. It is important to talk with your child and encourage them to discuss their feelings. Show your child that you understand and empathize with what they are going through by interacting with them in a non-threatening manner. If your child continues to experience issues, do not hesitate to enlist the help of your school counselor.

With love, patience, and guidance, you can help your child navigate through these tough times and continue to lead them on the path to becoming a productive and happy adult. For more ideas and insight on how to deal with your child's academic, social, and emotional development, visit [www.parenttoolkit.com](http://www.parenttoolkit.com) for growth charts that you can use to ensure your child is on the right track.

## ***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!***

This year, the Georgia Department of Education is introducing a new testing system called Georgia Milestones - an engaging and innovative online test for students in grades 3 to 12. Developed by educators, universities, and businesses, this assessment measures how well students have learned state-adopted content standards in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Georgia Milestones will officially replace the CRCT for students in grades 3 through 8 and the EOCT for high school students. Although, there will still be multiple choice questions, Georgia Milestones' key difference is that it will also feature constructed and extended response questions.

Constructed response questions will require students to create an answer rather than merely selecting one from a list of options. Extended response questions will consist of multiple parts that will require students to demonstrate a deeper level of understanding and reasoning on testing material. Both of these question formats are more engaging and provide students a better opportunity to demonstrate their skill level.

Each year, the results will provide a clear picture of a student's academic strengths and weaknesses and is essentially a roadmap of their academic journey. By requiring students to display more sophisticated levels of understanding, Georgia Milestones aims to raise proficiency levels and help students and parents better prepare for college or a career.

Be sure to help your student prepare for this important assessment by logging on to [www.georgiaoas.org](http://www.georgiaoas.org) for free practice exams. To find out the testing schedule for your school, consult with your child's teacher or school administrators.



## GEORGIA MILESTONES fast facts

- ✓ Helps students and parents better prepare for college or a career
- ✓ Administered to students in grades 3 through 12
- ✓ Provides students with critical information about their own achievement to better prepare for the next grade

## Taking Time to Talk With Your Child About Tests

via the official blog of the [U.S. Department of Education](http://www.ed.gov).

By Carrie Jasper

Assessments are part of life at school, but they don't have to be a source of stress. Helping your child prepare properly for an exam is important, and the conversation doesn't have to stop after the test is complete. Below are some tips parents might consider discussing with their child:

- Let your child know that you are proud of his/her achievements and together you will work on troublesome subject matter.
  - Learn about the type of tests the classroom teacher is using to prepare the children for the tests.
  - Learn about the type of tests the school, district, and state are using to measure the achievement of your child.
  - Find the school, district, or state website for information on the test. Samples of previous tests given may also be found at the website. Use them as practice tests for your child.
  - Be familiar with the terms used on the test (such as proficient, percentile, and norm-referenced) and be prepared to ask what those
- terms mean when talking with the classroom teacher, counselor, or principal.
  - If needed, schedule a meeting with the teacher to discuss your child's test results.
  - Ask your child's teacher for tips and ideas about working with your child at home. Are there specific packets or materials available that will help your child improve?
  - Ask the teacher if a private tutor might be available. Are there resources the teacher can provide?
  - Create a plan with the teacher to periodically check on your child's progress in deficient areas.
  - Involvement before and after any test can help children achieve their goals in the 21st century classroom.



# 04 Get to Know: Georgia's Statewide Longitudinal Data System

The Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) is a free tool that collects individual student data to help parents, teachers, and schools improve achievement levels. With engaging graphs and charts, SLDS presents important student information in a way that makes it easy for parents and educators to pinpoint student strengths and weaknesses overtime.

aligned to Georgia course standards. This allows parents to give their child extra practice on standards where there are opportunities for growth, or to accelerate students who can work on standards that are above their current course level. Parents can also utilize SLDS information to facilitate meaningful discussions during teacher conferences.



SLDS empowers parents by giving them 24-hour access to their child's statewide assessment and Lexile score history as far back as the 2006-2007 school year. Additionally, parents can access online instructional resources that are directly

Once your child's district has enabled the SLDS Parent Portal, parents can access it from a link within their school's Student Information System (SIS). This allows access to SLDS without having to remember any additional web addresses, logins, or

passwords. For the parents' convenience, help documents are posted on their school's SLDS Parent Portal, and district trainings are also available. For more information on how to log on to your school's SLDS, contact your child's teacher.

## JANUARY 8 - 14, 2015

### *National Letter Writing Week* –

This week was set aside to help people remember how satisfying it is to both write and receive a handwritten letter, so parents are encouraged to get out the pens and paper and write letters with their children.

## JANUARY 29, 2015

*National Puzzle Day* – This day promotes parents solving puzzles with their kids and teaching them how to think “outside the box”.

# Save the Dates

## FEBRUARY

*Parent Leadership Month* – This month is celebrated to expand opportunities for parent leaders to participate in meaningful parent leadership activities at the local, state and national levels.



## FEBRUARY 11, 2015

*National Inventors Day* – This day celebrates the birthday of Thomas Edison by encouraging parents to create new things with their children.

## 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

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