

Parent Engagement Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1, Fall 2010

“Successfully Engaging Georgia’s Parents”

“Georgia’s Families are Back to School”



**Brad Bryant,
State Superintendent**

Welcome back to school! This time of year isn’t exciting just for children, it is exciting for parents, too.

With the school year just beginning, there is no better opportunity than now to get involved in your child’s education. Take this time to start fresh and

reflect on how you will contribute to your child’s education this school year.

Studies show that parental involvement in a child’s education is one of the strongest indicators of student achievement. This means parents have to step it up; schools cannot educate alone. I know this can be hard, especially in times such as these when you are being asked to do more with less, but just as we continuously expect more from our children, we have to expect more from ourselves. Schools are really a supplement to a child’s education, while you, the parent, are the primary educator.

So regardless of how little or how much time you have, I ask that you make a commitment this year to encourage high educational expectations for your child, monitor your child’s academic and social progress, and build positive relationships with your child’s teacher and other school staff. And, of course, if you can volunteer your time and effort for other school projects or activities it would be much appreciated, too! Thanks for what you do every day to ensure Georgia’s students are reaching their full potential. Have a great school year!

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Highlights: Parent Engagement Program

The mission of the Georgia Department of Education’s Parent Engagement Program is to increase student achievement by engaging and empowering parents to become actively involved in their children’s education across all grade levels. While your local school and community is the best place to obtain information first, we are excited to provide many resources and tools to help you positively impact your child’s school and educational future such as:

- Have questions about what your child is learning, what support services are available to

help your child succeed, or what school options are available to best meet your child’s needs? Check out the Parent Website at <http://www.gadoe.org/parents.aspx> for helpful information and answers to those questions!

- Need to get involved? Not sure what you can do? Check out our “Get Involved!” brochure that lists 15 different ways parents and families can get involved in their children’s education.
- Join the party in November as we celebrate Georgia Family Engagement Month! Look out for events parents can attend and suggestions for family

activities throughout the month that will be provided by your school.

- Have a child starting Kindergarten next year? Kindergarten transition is a year long process, so it is never too early to get started. Check out our “Let’s Go to School” Brochure that helps children and their families begin school with a smooth transition.

Obtain copies of brochures by asking your school’s Parent Involvement Coordinator, contacting the Parent Engagement Program at 404-656-2633, or visiting the Parent Engagement Program’s website.



“We will lead the nation in improving student achievement.”

Learning Your Child's School System



Benefits of Having Involved Parents

- Fewer behavioral problems
- More likely to complete post secondary school
- Better academic performance
- Increased teacher support
- Potential problems are identified early

PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...



The American Heart Association suggests that teens raise their heart rates for 20 minutes without stopping, three or more times a week.

Learning about your child's school system is the first step to becoming an engaged parent and there is no better time to do this than when your child heads back to school! Would you know who to go to if your child started displaying academic challenges, needed to learn about career choices or was having behavior issues at home or school? If not, don't worry, you are not alone! Many parents are not aware of who they can turn to resolve certain issues they may encounter. The education system can be hard to navigate and with various school staff, it can be tough to know who can help with a particular issue.

The good news is that schools have been developed to educate your child in a way so that he or she may flourish and want you to be informed! Every school's staff members are in place to assist you with your needs. If you know who to go to for help, you are more likely to receive a response and solution. When it comes to your child's education, the common expression "knowledge is power" definitely proves true in this case.

If you are not sure who to talk to about a particular issue, you can always ask to speak with the school principal. The principal is the leader of the school and is often able to address any of

your concerns or needs. You should feel comfortable and confident talking with your child's principal.

It's also important that you get to know your child's teachers. Did you know that teachers of students with highly involved parents tend to give greater attention to those students, and they are more likely to identify problems that might hinder student learning at early ages. So as a new school year begins, ask the school for a current list of all school personnel and make sure to note the role each person plays. With this information in hand, you will now be informed, involved, and know who to contact when an issue arises.

Dads Make a Difference!

Many dads feel out of place at school, but that shouldn't be the case. Father involvement is linked to better learning, discipline and enjoyment of school. Getting involved doesn't have to be complicated. It's as simple as having lunch with your child, attending an event or volunteering when you can. Support the school and your child—and be proud that you're making a difference.

One way our state is seeking to involve dads more is through the Georgia PTA Dad's Initiative. Their mission is to enhance positive relationships between fathers and their children and encourage cooperative parenting by educating, empowering and encouraging fathers to stay actively involved in their children's lives.

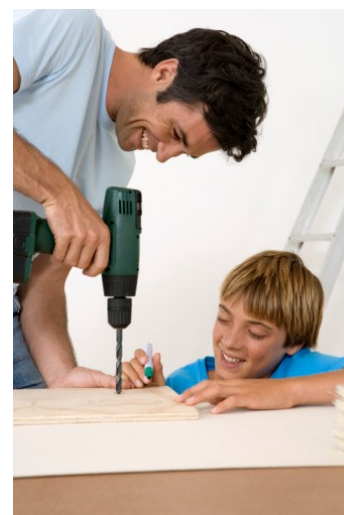
Georgia PTA Dad's Initiative Goals:

- Educate - Fathers, public, social services agencies and professionals
- Empower - Fathers to be involved, committed and responsible

- Encourage - Father-child relationships, cooperative parenting and equality
- Eliminate - Father's absence in children's lives and bias towards fathers
- Expand - Reach out to fathers in need (low income, minority, incarcerated, isolated) and help father-child interactions/relationships
- Enrich a man's experience as a dad and the lives of his children

Expectations can motivate children to reach high achievements. Dad, here are five suggestions for using expectations in a positive way:

- ◆ First, list the expectations you have for your children in areas like school, sports, behavior, and so on.
- ◆ Second, dad, communicate your expectations positively.
- ◆ Third, be aware of your children's strengths, weaknesses, interests and dreams. One of the great dangers of fathering is molding your children into your own image instead of helping them discover who they have been created to be.



◆ Fourth, be a reliable model. When you demonstrate the behavior that you expect from your children, the limits and expectations you place on them make more sense

◆ Finally, love your child no matter what. A child who's appreciated and accepted for who he is -- regardless of his performance -- won't feel pressure, but freedom. He'll have the self-esteem and confidence to excel.

Permission to reproduce:
Source: "Men Working: A How-to Guide on Promoting Father Involvement," National PTA, www.pta.org/www.georgiapta.org

Talking to Your Child about Their Report Card

A child's report card can bring feelings of joy, excitement, and pride; it can also cause concern, frustration, and uncertainty. In either case, the reporting period marks a new beginning to set goals as well as reflect on past work habits, achievements, and hardships. Most important, it is a time for parents to communicate with their children and determine a path for future academic enrichment and social/emotional growth.

Focus on the positive

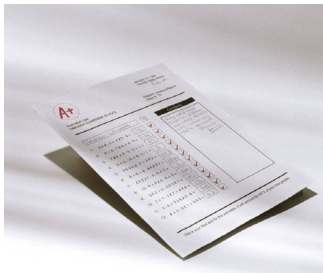
Regardless of the grades your child brings home, you must first focus on positive aspects of the report. This is not always an easy task. For some parents, this might mean highlighting a strong effort or citizenship grade, or congratulating an academic accomplishment. It could mean praising a perfect attendance record or acknowledging a small improvement shown in a particular area. Starting on a positive note shows your child that you truly care about the accomplishments, not only areas that need improvement.

Ask the right questions

Be careful not to overreact to low grades, or grades you view to be unsatisfactory. Instead, use this time to look at past performance and plan

for the future. Talk to your child, asking questions to understand how a particular grade was earned:

- Was the work too difficult?
- Could the pace of the class be inappropriate?
- Does your child complete all homework and ask questions when problems arise?



The answers you receive might indicate a need to review your child's study habits. Determine whether or not your child is recording all assignments and bringing home all materials necessary to complete them. Does your child have a specific place to study where resources (including someone to answer questions) are available and distractions are minimized? Is your child completing all homework on a nightly basis, or are assignments being turned in late, or not at all? Once you have determined the problem, you can begin to create a solution.

The next step

Creating a plan to maximize future academic success is an important part of every child's education. Help your child set realistic and attainable goals for the next reporting period. Outline ways in which these goals can be met, as well as rewards and consequences if they are not. Type the "official plan" and post one copy in a prominent household location, another in your child's binder, and forward another to her teacher. Involving your child gives her ownership and importance in this process; and this makes the report card important not only to you, but also to your child.

As parents, we want the best for our children, but in too many cases this is measured only by the number of As and Bs brought home. Emphasize to your child the importance of doing the very best job that he can. Encourage him to succeed, and measure his progress in realistic terms, letting him know that you care and are available to help. Break tasks into small steps, so that even the youngest child can measure her growth, and the most advanced child can monitor her progress. By reviewing the report card, and developing a plan for the future, you will help your child find the road to success.

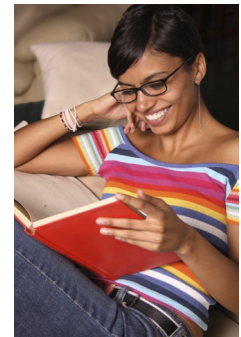
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Source: Family Education Network, a branch of Pearson Education.
<http://school.familyeducation.com/report-cards/parents-and-school/38368.html>

PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

There are limitations on what your child can realistically do, so it's important for you to adjust to the individual needs of each child and not take on a one size fits all approach.



Parents, help your child see that reading is important. Set a good example for your child by reading books, newspapers, and magazines.



Reading Tips for Teens

- Teen Read Week is October 17-23, 2010!
- Try to read for at least 15 minutes before going to sleep.
- Carry your favorite book in your back pack.
- Talk to your friends and family about the book you're reading.
- Take your time! You don't have to hurry when you're reading for fun.
- Ask your parents, siblings and friends what books they like and recommend.

Common Areas of Parental Concern...

Check off the questions you want to ask your child's teacher:

- How does my child's work compare to the work of other students?
- Is my child in any special classes, groups, or programs? Why?
- Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?

- What programs are available if my child needs extra help?
- Has my child missed any classes or failed to complete any assignments?
- What concerns do you have about my child's behavior or academic progress?
- Is my child working up to his or her ability?

- How can I encourage my child to read?
- What goals have you set for my child this year?
- What can I do at home to help my child be successful?
- How well does my child get along with others?
- How can I get in touch with you?

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Remember to block off important dates!

Family Health & Fitness Day
September 25, 2010

Fire Prevention Week
October 3-9, 2010

School Lunch Week
October 11-15, 2010

School Bus Safety Week
October 18-22, 2010

Red Ribbon Week
October 23-31, 2010

National Parent Involvement Day
November 18, 2010

Georgia's Parent Engagement Month!
November

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!

www.gadoe.org/parents.aspx
http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):

What parents should know...



“The law requires states, districts, and schools to develop ways to get parents more involved in their child’s education.”

ESEA, formerly known as No Child Left Behind, empowers parents to ask important questions and make informed decisions about their child’s education. This is accomplished by ensuring that schools are held accountable for distributing current information to parents.

The law also requires states, districts, and Title I schools to develop ways to get parents more involved in their child’s education. These schools and districts are required to have written policies on parental involvement and provide this information to parents.

ESEA holds every school accountable for results,

especially among students who are in economically disadvantaged status, have disabilities or do not have English as their first language. This measure of accountability is commonly referred to as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Each year school districts are required to provide an AYP report in a language that is easily understood. This report includes the school’s AYP status and School Improvement status. Based on these statuses, Title I schools may also be required to offer Public School Choice and/or Supplemental Education Services (free tutoring). If required, these options will be listed on the report.

AYP and state report cards are prepared and issued every year by the Georgia Department of Education to provide progress and performance information relevant to the schools. If your child is not in a Title I school, your child’s school is still required to provide performance reports information.

Parents are encouraged to ask school personnel additional questions if they are unsure about the performance of their child’s school. Additional information can also be obtained on www.gadoe.org. Click on school reports located on the right side of the page to locate your school and district.