

# Parent Engagement Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 3, Spring 2011

“Successfully Engaging Georgia’s Parents”

## “Warm Welcome from Superintendent Barge ”



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

The school year is nearly over and there’s no doubt that you have been busy helping your child prepare for their end of the year assessments and graduation. You are to be commended for your dedication and loyalty to helping your children achieve.

I am very passionate about education and family. If we don’t teach our children how to use the knowledge they are given, they will struggle to find success. Over the years I’ve had the opportunity to work in educational settings in urban, suburban and rural areas. I’ve been an English teacher, a principal, curriculum director and have served in many other capacities. Today, I am honored to serve as State School Superintendent and have the ability to make changes that will increase student achievement throughout the state of Georgia for years to come. I believe that

education is a great equalizer and it is every child’s ticket to success. I value the input of parents and believe that all children should have the same opportunity to obtain a quality education.

Parents set the tone for the education of their children. There are certain things that parents have to teach their children that the school cannot. The work of a parent is never complete. So, on behalf of Georgia’s school systems, I want to thank all of our parents for staying involved.

Sincerely,

Dr. John D. Barge,  
State School Superintendent

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“Improving student achievement and shaping brighter futures.”

## 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 inform you about the following events that recently took place to recognize the important role parents play in their children’s education:

- Parent Action Day was held on January 26, 2011 at the State Capitol. A host of parents gathered together on this day to promote parents as leaders and learn about how the legislative process influences their

child’s education. Parents were welcomed by local and state representatives to speak with them about their concerns and they visited with many non-profit, government and educational organizations. This day promoted “Parent Power.”

- February was *Parent Leadership Month*. This month was designed to recognize the important role parents play in the lives of their children and to emphasize the need to have parent leaders. Many schools and communities celebrated this month by hosting various parenting events.

- The Georgia Department of Education has developed a Comprehensive Services brochure that provides an overview of services that are

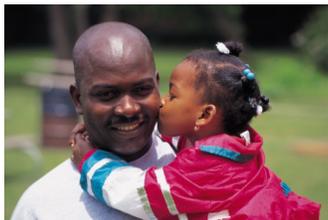
available at the Department to promote graduation. These services are listed with a brief synopsis of what can be obtained by taking advantage of these resources.

- Need to get involved yourself? 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. The brochure is not age specific, so all parents can utilize this resource.

To obtain copies of the brochure or to locate copies of any of the information mentioned above, contact the Parent Engagement Program at 404-656-2633 or visit our website at:

[http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss\\_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement](http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement)

## “Building the Bridge for Parents” by Niecy Frazier, Parent



### PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

You can avoid toddler NO's and turn them into YES by phrasing your directions in a fun tone of voice.



### It's that time of the year!

As graduation approaches, it's important to make sure all of your child's post-secondary plans are in place. Be sure to consult with your school guidance counselor and advisors if you need additional help.

I'm writing this letter to give feedback about my personal experience, the voices of my large parent network and to show my dedication to every child's learning path. The ultimate goal in this journey is to make sure that all students are prepared to accomplish their school's mission. Once a child knows that school is a priority to their parent, he or she will make school a priority as well and stay positively engaged. Being a huge supporter of parent networking and outreach, my personal objective is to increase parent involvement and build a movement.

Give parents an opportunity to **make a pledge** to their child's future. Do you recall the “No Phone Zone” pledge that has received national acclaim? It empowers people not to use their cell phones while driving. I believe we should build a similar pledge for parent involvement in Georgia.

We have to ask ourselves, how do we get over 90% parent involvement with an average of 300-500 students per school? That's possibly one parent, guardian, or grandparent, per student. How can we get parents completely engaged and more involved? What will interest a parent? Why is parent participation so low? How do we build their level of enthusiasm?

With that being said, what additional resources can be provided to parents? We need an initiative to build the momentum. My daughter is in Kindergarten, I have a three year old son that will soon be a part of the Georgia school system and the future of my adoptive children will follow that journey as well. I

have a long term investment with the school system and during that time, my goal is to help educate parents and help them become advocates for their school system by becoming a verbal advocate for their child. I volunteer very frequently at my child's school and I am a member of the PTA. Staying active is important to me and my child loves it. We need more parents across the board to help their schools in order to bridge this gap, come full circle and maintain a positive level of creditability for Georgia. We must make a pledge as parents!



A lot of times you will find that parents won't speak up because they don't have the confidence, and/or they feel their voice will not be heard. It's amazing how the social media networks have captivated people to interact more, but we can't get that type of parent involvement in the schools. Is it that parents' don't have time in the evenings or are they not interested in the particular workshops being provided? We have to think outside the box.

Each child in the school system has their own personality trait and our objective as the parent is to help those traits evolve into academic excellence. Through this journey, we can help other parents build great success at home and in the school system. Every

parent's goal is to help their child advance academically and that's something we want for all children. Some parents forget that in this journey, they have to do their part in order to be involved.

If a parent is looking to be an involved parent, there are hundreds of questions they should ask themselves. Just to name a few, as parents, we must ask ourselves: Do I know all of my child's teachers by name? Do I know when the next PTA meeting is scheduled? Do I know what curriculum night is?

Do I know what the parents VIP program is about? Do I check my child's assignments daily? Do I communicate with my child's teacher weekly? Do I know when my child is taking the CRCT? Do I read with my child? Do I know what a parent center is? Have I logged into my school's parent portal to check my child's grades? There are millions of questions; it doesn't stop there because the list can go on.

With any school, the objective is to make sure that each child is getting a top quality education. As a parent, I would like to continue to add and build a genuine, successful education for all children and their parents. I know I can't speak for all parents, but the ultimate goal in this journey is to make sure that the students are prepared to accomplish the school's mission and have the parental support needed to guide them through life. I want to ensure that success happens with every parent and every student. I am personally appealing to join hands and build a new initiative for parents to help build a successful future.

Warm regards,  
Niecy Frazier

## Creating a Positive Body Image in Children and Teens

Children and teens are always looking for role models. Fashion magazines, athletes, movie stars, popular kids at school and even you are influencing the standards they set for their appearance and behavior.

American culture can sometimes send the message that how a person looks is how a person is valued. With this message, many feel their body is the enemy and they must fix it, dress it up, deprive it and try to improve it. In the extreme, these negative attitudes can lead to eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

While it's fashionable to blame the media for these self-defeating attitudes, parents often contribute as well. When was the last time you said something positive or negative about your own body? Have you said something negative a lot more recently than you said something positive?

Similarly, when was the last time you said something positive about your son's or daughter's body? It doesn't have to be related to appearance. Instead you could say, "I'm really impressed that you are

strong enough to carry in those groceries" or, "you seem to be getting better hand-eye coordination when you play basketball." The goal is to appreciate the function of the body over its appearance.



Photo credit April Sorrow/UGA:  
**Encourage children to have a positive body image.**

People tend to think criticizing their bodies will shame them into a dramatic change in eating or exercise habits. While many people could be more fit, rarely does bad-mouthing result in a beauty queen figure or an elite athlete body. In fact, if we feel bad about ourselves, we usually just sit more on the couch and eat larger amounts of comfort food to

escape our unhappy thoughts.

To begin to change your family's body image, start with yourself. Focus on what your body does well, not where it is deficient. Instead of always saying bad things about your body, make positive statements such as, "my body feels great after taking a walk" or "my skin looks so much better when I get enough sleep." Don't feel uncomfortable doing this. You are not bragging, just stating a fact.

Many people suffer from negative self-centeredness. In reality, no one pays much attention to anyone else for more than a few seconds. Can you remember what your friend, spouse or children were wearing today? Often, we think people are much more interested in us than they really are.

Don't let body shape prevent you or your family members from participating in fun physical activities because you think you look bad in a swimsuit, sports uniform or exercise outfit. You'll never look better if you sit at home worrying about how you look.

Permission to reproduce:  
(Connie Crawley, Nutrition and Health Specialist  
with University of Georgia Extension.)

### PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

Body image is closely linked to self-esteem and it's been proven that children and teens who have high self-esteem make friends easier, have better control of their behavior and enjoy life more.



### TURN OFF THE TELEVISION!



The average person watches 5-6 hours of television per day. Here are some healthy alternatives:

- Read a book or novel
- Go to the park
- Cook a new recipe for the family
- Visit with friends
- Play a board game with the family
- Go bike riding or walking on a trail

## Test Taking Tips for Parents!

As we approach the testing season, there are many ways to provide support and acquire additional learning tools for your children so they can do their best. Often children face anxiety and feel a great deal of pressure during this time of the year. Some children are preparing to advance to the next grade level while others are preparing to attend college for the first time.

Parents can help alleviate stress and get their child excited about testing by

employing a few simple strategies.

Here are a few suggestions that can be considered as you seek to prepare your child for testing:

- Keep a positive attitude.
- Mark down test days on your calendar as a reminder.
- Encourage your child to space out study time and homework assignments.
- Motivate your child to do well, but *do not* pressure them.

- Make sure your child gets enough sleep the night before and eats breakfast on the day of the test.
- Review the test material with your child after they have taken it and go over mistakes they've made to better prepare them for future tests.
- Provide a quiet, well lit study space for your child.
- Praise your child for their hard work.

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TestTakingTips.com.

## Program Staff

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

**Lakeita Servance,**  
Parent Engagement Specialist  
lservance@doe.k12.ga.us  
404-656-2633

**Outreach Programs Division**  
1862 Twin Towers East  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE  
Atlanta, GA 30334



### Remember to block off these important dates!

**National Stress Awareness Month**  
April 2011

**Week of the Young Child**  
April 10-16, 2011

**National TV Turnoff Week**  
April 19-25, 2011

**Public School Volunteer Week**  
April 19-25, 2011

**Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month**  
May 2011

**National Physical Education & Sport Week**  
May 1-7, 2011

**National Teacher's Day**  
May 4, 2011

### 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://www.gadoe.org/parents.aspx)  
[http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss\\_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement](http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement)

## Capitalizing on Teachable Moments at Home



**Children are exposed to teachable moments everyday. Are you taking advantage of those teachable moments with your child?**

Did you know that there are many educational resources and tools available in your own home? You can use simple teaching strategies at home or anywhere you go with your children by putting simple techniques and creativity together. It's important that parents practice patience with their children in order to capture these teachable moments.

These are some ideas of what parents can do with their children everyday, during the commute to and from school, and on the weekends:

- To increase math skills, allow your child to help you with dinner by measuring some of the ingredients.
- Read food labels in the

grocery store and practice cost comparison.

- Identify highway signs and traffic light signals (stop, yield, go) and test your child for accuracy.
- Plug-in some science and chemistry lessons by teaching your child the importance of sorting clothes before washing them.



Using some unwanted pieces, you can demonstrate what

happens when you don't separate the clothes.

- Play games together that promote higher level thinking skills such as chess or checkers.
- Practice manners and etiquette during dinner time, when guests come over, or when answering the telephone.

You can avoid becoming frustrated during these teachable moments by being practical and reasonable in your expectations for your child. Don't expect perfection from your child. Give praise freely and reward positive behavior often. Such practices will help keep children engaged and excited about learning and thus increase their academic achievement.