

Parent Engagement Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 2, Winter 2010

“Successfully Engaging Georgia’s Parents”

“Georgia’s Parents are Extraordinary”



**Brad Bryant,
State Superintendent**

Parents, the school year is nearly half over and there’s no doubt that you have been busy helping with homework, attending PTA meetings, watching student programs, and engaging with your child’s teachers at parent-teacher conferences.

As the father of two adult children who attended Georgia’s public schools, I remember how difficult it can be to get involved in your child’s education. Life is demanding and there is almost never enough time. When the excitement of back to school has worn off and the school day has become part of your regular routine, remember that being active in your child’s education is arguably the most important role a parent plays.

Parents set the tone for education and are their child’s best teacher. Therefore, I would like to commend you for all of the

hard work you have been doing and remind you to remain a positive presence in your child’s life. I’m proud to say that I, along with the State Board of Education, celebrated and personally recognized parents during November, which was Parent Engagement Month. As we approach the winter break, I want to encourage you to keep challenging your children.

The work of a parent is never complete. So, on behalf of Georgia’s school systems, I want to thank all of the parents and families who have taken on the full-time job of being involved in their child’s education.

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

Is Your Teen Prepared for College?

Many parents eagerly anticipate the day their teen graduates from high school, but that joy can be diminished quickly if your child is not prepared for the next step in his or her life. Parents play a major role in helping their teens map out post secondary plans, which could include but are not limited to attending a two-year college or four-year university. To assist with the planning, here are few suggestions you can keep in mind as you begin the process:

- **Identify your child’s career path**

Parents can help their children identify a career by supporting the development of their talents, skills, and interests. Children need guidance and support with making this important

decision.

- **You can never start too early**

You and your child can start planning for college as early as the sixth grade! Starting early gives the family an opportunity to make an informed decision instead of a rushed one.



- **Tap into free resources**

There is so much free information available now about programs, colleges, and universities. Visit websites or talk to your school counselor about how

to tap into what is available.

- **Plan college tours**

This can be very time consuming and stressful, so make it fun by turning college tours in to family road trips. Ask questions while taking the tour and pay close attention to the college environment. Make sure to visit while students are there instead of when the campus is empty.

- **Avoid scams**

Beware of potential scams that will not benefit your child, such as too good to be true scholarship guarantees, high cost college search agencies, and loans with upfront fees. If you suspect a scam, check with your school counselor.

To obtain more information about colleges, career planning and funding sources, visit www.gacollege411.org.

Nutrition and Fitness:

Learn how to keep your children healthy with the right food and exercise.

We all recognize the importance of good nutrition and exercise, but how do you feed a picky eater or encourage a child who hates playing sports to exercise? Here are some suggestions:

How should I deal with a picky eater?

Encourage your child to try different nutritious foods at each meal. You may have to present a food 10 to 15 times before they'll try it. This is

not uncommon. You shouldn't cook special meals just for a picky eater, but do include something he or she likes in every meal. Look for new recipes with ingredients your child likes



then invite them to go grocery shopping and cook meals with you.

Why is breakfast so important?

In general, kids and teens that eat breakfast have more energy, do better in school, and eat healthier throughout the day. Without breakfast, people can be irritable, restless, and tired. Choosing breakfast foods that are rich in whole grains, fiber, and protein may boost kids' attention span, concentration, and memory so make time for breakfast.

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PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

"In general, kids and teens who eat breakfast have more energy, do better in school, and eat healthier throughout the day."

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:

- November was Parent Engagement Month! Governor Perdue proclaimed November as Parent Engagement Month in Georgia to encourage parents to remain actively involved in the education of their children. Schools and districts planned numerous activities and celebrations in honor of parents throughout the month of November.

- On November 10, 2010 the State Board of Education unanimously signed Georgia's first Resolution and Statement on Parent Engagement! These documents are the guiding foundation for local school

officials to develop local school and district plans and policies, providing a framework for parent-school-community partnerships. This resolution was written by parents on the 2010 and 2011 Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council, and it represents how parents can play an active role in the decision making process by being leaders in our school communities!

- Thursday, November 18, 2010 was *National* Parent Involvement Day! On this day, parents across the United States celebrated by acknowledging the importance of giving back to their child's education and school. Also, State Superintendent of Schools, Brad Bryant, wrote a letter to Georgia's parents thanking them for being involved.

- There is no better way to inspire parents to get involved than by sharing other parents' real life stories. During November, the Parent Engagement Program was able to capture many GET INVOLVED moments by collecting stories from parents across the state that were submitted by local schools and districts.

- In honor of Parent Engagement Month the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Parental Information Resource Center teamed up with Georgia Public Broadcasting to create GET INVOLVED video scenarios that capture real parents telling their real stories about ways to get involved. These videos are available in English and Spanish on the Parent Engagement Program's website listed below.

- 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 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



Nip School Bullying in the Bud By Brad Haire, University of Georgia

Everyone gets bullied at some point in life, and it will most likely happen at school. If your child is being bullied, you can do some things to help stop it.

Bullying can come in many forms, including physical or emotional abuse, damage to a child's property, spreading malicious rumors or forcing a child to do something he or she doesn't want to do, said Sharon Gibson, a University of Georgia Cooperative Extension family and consumer science educator. A consistently bullied student can have emotional problems and perform poorly in school. And if the bullying is physical, it can take its toll on the student's body.

Don't ignore the problem. And don't tell your child to ignore the bully. "When a child is bullied, he or she may feel angry, helpless or deserted," Gibson said. "If that child tells a teacher or parent about the bullying, he or she needs to know it's not tattling and that speaking about it was the right thing."

Calm down

Parents can become angry when they first learn their child is being bullied. "Parents should stay calm and first find out if their child is in any immediate physical danger," she said.

The most important thing to do is find a way to stop the bullying. Ask for a meeting with the principal of your child's school.

The principal can then determine if and when to bring the child's teacher or teachers into the conversation. "Again, parents should stay calm. If they're not, this could set up a defensive action by school officials," she said. "Parents should be proactive, but not demanding before they learn more about the situation at school."



Photo credit Sharon Dowdy
Sad girl sitting on school steps.

Teachers and principals are trained to deal with issues like bullying, she said. So voice your concerns, but listen, too. Most schools have an action plan to deal with bully situations. If the school doesn't, offer to help develop a plan.

The child doing the bullying should be given a chance to reform. The child who is being bullied should have an adult contact at school to tell if the bullying doesn't stop. This person could be the teacher or a paraprofessional.

Help teachers help

A lot is going on in the average classroom, Gibson said. Teachers or paraprofessionals can have their hands full all day. It can be tough to concentrate on one child.

Gibson recommends setting up a code word for the bullied child to use when he or she feels uncomfortable or in danger due to bullying. This will inform the adult without the child having to raise a hand or bring much attention. The adult can then investigate or even witness the bullying.

Follow up with the school to make sure steps are in place to keep your child from being bullied. At home, encourage good social skills and behavior. Help your child find his or her talents, and praise accomplishments.

"A confident, assertive child is less likely to be the target of a bully," Gibson said.

*Permission to reprint.
(Brad Haire is a news editor with the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.)*

PARENTS, DID YOU KNOW...

You can help your child develop independence by assigning them chores, allowing them to resolve simple problems on their own, and resisting the urge to do things for them that they can do themselves.



How much sleep does your child need?



•4-12 Months Old:

14 - 15 hours per day

•1-3 Years Old:

12 - 14 hours per day

•3-6 Years Old:

10 - 12 hours per day

•7-12 Years Old:

10 - 11 hours per day

•12-18 Years Old:

8 - 9 hours per day

How to Keep Your Child Busy During Winter Break!

As winter break approaches, many parents seek ways to keep their children busy so they are not overwhelmed with boredom. Families can seize this opportunity to spend more time together and plan special activities or trips. However, it's also important to incorporate academics as a part of the planning because teachers often complain that students come back to school unprepared to continue with the curriculum. Here are a few suggestions that can be

considered as you seek to accommodate everyone's wishes:

- Map out at least an hour per day for homework and academics. This hour can be broken up into four increments of fifteen minutes or two thirty minute sessions.
- Assign chores and distribute coupons for additional TV and video game time once they have completed their chores to your expectation.
- Reward good behavior by allowing your children to stay up past curfew and sleep in late.
- Take your children to the local library to check out books of their choice to read over the winter break. Talk to them daily and ask them to tell you what they are enjoying about it.
- Play games as a family, rent movies that you all want to see and enjoy your time together!

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Remember to block off these important dates!

National Card Playing Day
December 28, 2010

National Trivia Day
January 4, 2011

Parent Action Day
January 26, 2011

National Puzzle Day
January 29, 2011

National Stop Bullying Day
February 9, 2011

Children's Dental Health Month
February 2011

Parent Leadership Month
February 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://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement

Peer Pressure: What Parents Should Know...



Negative peer pressure is something everyone has to deal with at some point. Is your child prepared?

Peer pressure has been defined as someone being forced by others around the same age to change his or her attitude, values or behavior in order to fit in with a group. All peer pressure isn't negative. Some youth are challenged to perform better by joining academic clubs, playing sports or participating in other extracurricular activities.

Naturally, children want to be well liked and accepted by their peers. At times, they may feel closer to their friends than they do to parents and siblings. Often, parents find out about negative peer pressure after the fact, but there are some ways to prevent this from happening. You can do the following:

- Develop and encourage friendships with positive role models, mentors or older sibling(s).
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents.
- Know where your child is at all times.
- Encourage independence by reinforcing that being different is okay.
- Embrace diversity by helping your child strive to have friends of all races, backgrounds, and social classes.
- Praise and teach assertiveness.
- Stress that negative consequences come along with certain behaviors.

It's not enough to *hope* that your child will know how to handle a situation when faced with negative peer pressure. It is your obligation not only

to prepare your child, but pay close attention to him or her so you will notice pattern changes. If you suspect that your child is being negatively influenced by their peers, you can take steps to resolve the issue by:

- Communicating
- Initiating practice sessions on how to deal with different situations
- Nurturing strong self-esteem
- Instilling strong values, standards and morals
- Planning family time and social events
- BEING THERE

If you need additional support in helping your child cope with peer pressure, you can also seek assistance from the school counselor, social worker or Parent Involvement Coordinator.