

Welcoming Environments: Is Your School Family-Friendly?

2015 GCEL Conference

*Celebrating 30 Years: Honoring the
Past & Envisioning the Future*

March 3, 2015

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**Parent Engagement Program Manager
Georgia Department of Education
Office of School Improvement
Outreach Programs Division**

**THE GEORGIA
FAMILY FRIENDLY
PARTNERSHIP
SCHOOL AWARDS**

**2014
WINNERS** 

Switching Places: What if You...



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- Had three little children and no child care?
- Didn't have a car or cash for the bus?
- Didn't speak English and there was not an interpreter at the school?
- Were a grandparent raising a child and found the school environment intimidating?
- Had a husband/partner who expects you to be at home at night?
- Did poorly in school and think your child's problems are your fault?
- Had to work Monday nights when the PTA always has its meetings?
- Saw the PTA as a snobby "in crowd" that ignores people who don't dress a certain way, speak English well, or live in a "nice" neighborhood?

Switching Places: What if You Found...



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- The school is difficult to find within the community?
- The parking is limited and there are not designated parent/visitor spaces?
- It is difficult to get an appointment with the principal?
- You have been ignored or treated rudely by the school secretary?
- The school does not encourage parents to volunteer?
- There is not a person designated to work with parents and address their concerns?
- The building does not reflect the diversity of the school population?
- There is not a system in place to communicate school news and events with families regularly?

Learning Outcomes

Why

Family-Friendly Self-Assessment
Statistics and Research

What

Partnership Schools Overview
National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships

How

Georgia's Virtual Family-Friendly Partnership Schools
Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership Schools Award

Questions



How Family-Friendly Is Your School?



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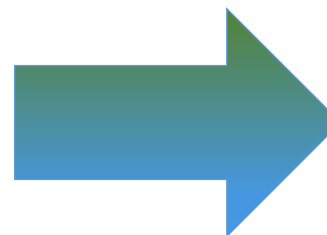
How Family - Friendly Is Your School?

Part of the Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Initiative

Before viewing the Georgia Virtual Family - Friendly Partnership Schools, take a minute to complete this self assessment. *How family - friendly is your school?* In column one place a check mark beside the items you feel represent your school. Then, after viewing the Georgia Virtual Family - Friendly Partnership Schools review your choices. *Do you still think your school is family - friendly in those areas?* Now using column two place an X beside the items you would like to improve or implement in your school.

1. The school is easy to find within the community and the front entrance of the building can be easily identified.
2. The front of the school depicts a welcoming environment that naturally makes families and visitors feel accepted and at ease.
3. The school provides various guest badges upon sign in representing either a parent, a volunteer, or a visitor.
4. The front office staff is friendly and helpful. They assist and recognize visitors immediately, as well as answer the phone and treat visitors politely.

	1	2



Did You Know...



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that these are the
children in your schools?



- ❖ According to the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University, more than 74 million children (birth to age eighteen) live in the United States.
- ❖ Of those more than 74 million children, about 42% live in low-income families.

What Does That Mean?



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▣ Low-income = unable to afford basic necessities

▣ **31 MILLION = Low-Income**



▣ Poverty can impede a child's ability to learn and contribute to social, emotional and behavioral problems.

▣ **15.5 MILLION = Poverty**



▣ Sadly, the number of children in poverty has been rising steadily since 2000.



HOW DO WE GET FAMILIES INVOLVED?



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Change the CULTURE!



Core Beliefs



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Parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.

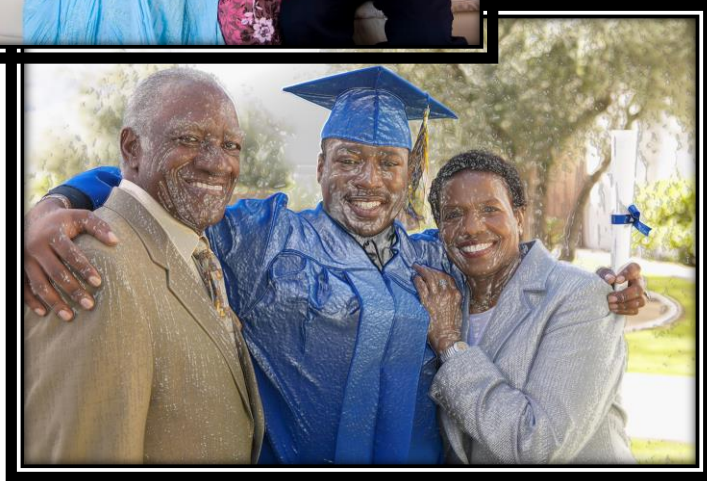
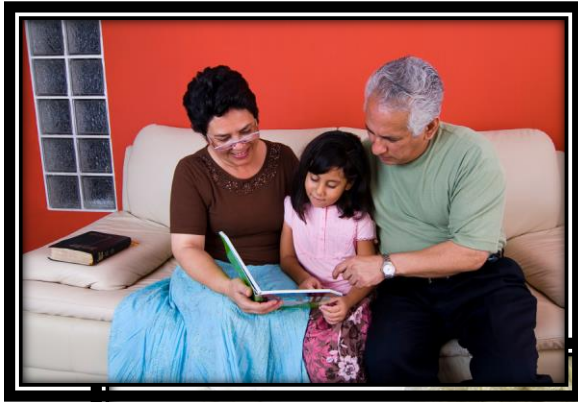
- I. All parents have the capacity to support their children's learning.
- II. Parents and school staff should be equal partners.
- III. Responsibility for building partnerships between school and home rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.



Parents Are More Likely to Become Involved When:



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- Parents understand that they **SHOULD** be involved.
- Parents feel **CAPABLE** of making a contribution.
- Parents feel **INVITED** by their school and children.



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Why Welcoming Environments?

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships

Where is Your School?



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When it comes to partnering with families and the community, how does your school rank?

There are four levels of achievement when defining schools based on partnership:



Partnership School
Open-Door School
Come-IF-We-Call School
Fortress School

Partnership School

Bridging the Gap and Connecting to the Parents of Children in Your Schools...



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*We must build a bridge between home and school but
also between home and student.*

Five Categories



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**There are five categories that help indicate
your particular type of school:**

1. Building Relationships
2. Linking to Learning
3. Addressing Differences
4. Supporting Advocacy
5. Sharing Power



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1. Building Relationships



- Family center is always open and full of interesting learning materials to borrow
- Home visits/school tours are available for new families
- Personal communication and contact is encouraged and evident
- Building is open to community use and social services are available to families

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2. Link to Learning

- All family activities connect to what students are learning
- Parents and teachers look at student work and test results together
- Community groups offer tutoring and homework programs at the school
- Students' work goes home every week, with a scoring guide



3. Addressing Differences



- Interpreters are readily available
- Teachers use books and materials about families' cultures
- PTA includes all families
- Local groups help staff reach parents

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4. Supporting Advocacy

- There is a clear, open process for resolving problems
- Teachers contact families regularly to discuss student progress and concerns
- Student-led parent-teacher conferences are held three times a year for thirty minutes



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5. Sharing Power



- Parents and teachers research issues such as prejudice and tracking
- Parent group is focused on improving student achievement
- Families are involved in all major decisions

- Parents can use the school's office equipment
- Staff work with local organizations to improve the school and neighborhood

PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships



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The focus is not what schools should do to involve parents – it is what parents, schools, and communities can do *together* to support student success.



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Welcoming All Families into the School Community



Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Georgia's Family-Friendly Partnership Schools



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Georgia's Virtual Family-Friendly Partnership Schools

Click on one of the schools to explore what makes it family-friendly.



CREDITS

Where to Start: Data Based Decision Making



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Family - Friendly School Parent Survey

Part of the Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Initiative

For the following questions, please circle the answer that you agree with the most:

I feel welcome and accepted at my child's school.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
I enjoy visiting my child's school.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
The school has parking spaces for parents.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
I am able to find my way easily around the school.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
The school has opportunities that allow me to meet and speak with the staff at my child's school.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
My child's principal and assistant principal are available and easy to approach.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
I am comfortable going to the front office when visiting my child's school.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
The school's front office staff is nice, polite, and helpful.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
The school has a translator for non-English speaking families when needed.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY
The school provides written materials in languages other than English for non-English speaking families.	YES	NO	NOT SURE	DOES NOT APPLY



Family - Friendly Partnership School Walk - Through

Part of the Georgia Family - Friendly Partnership School Initiative

School Name: _____ City, State: _____

Type of School (Please Circle): Elementary Middle High

At this school, I am a (Please Circle All that Apply): Parent Teacher Administrator Staff Community Member Other

For the following, please circle the box that you observe during your walk-through:

SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; N – Neutral; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree

WELCOMING ALL FAMILIES

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

"Parents report that a welcoming process creates a sense of belonging. Not only do parents feel that they belong to the school, but they also feel that the school belongs to them." (2)

There are dedicated parking spots for parents at the front entrance of the school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The school provides opportunities for parent training and education.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The front office staff is helpful and friendly to all visitors	SA	A	N	D	SD
The school has established support networks that are available to parents.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The school uses home visits to share information with families.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The principal is open and available to parents to discuss various issues and schedule meetings.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The school makes it easy for parents that do not speak English to participate in activities or receive information over the phone or in person.	SA	A	N	D	SD

Let's Put the Tool to Use!



Georgia's Virtual Family-Friendly Partnership Schools

Click on one of the schools to explore what makes it family-friendly.



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Are you a Georgia Family – Friendly Partnership School?



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**The Georgia
Family – Friendly
Partnership
School Awards**



Apply for the Award!

Georgia Family Friendly Partnership School Awards



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Eligibility

- The school must be identified as a *schoolwide* Title I school.
- The school must **not** be designated as a **Priority School** or **Focus School** under the Georgia Waiver for ESEA requirements.
- The school may *not* have been a **Family-Friendly Partnership School Award recipient** within the last *five years*.



Georgia Family Friendly Partnership School Awards



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Selection

- A panel of six judges *assesses* the *written applications*.
- Up to *twenty finalists* are announced.
- Judges conduct *surprise school site visits* to determine winners.
- Up to *ten schools* are announced as *winners*.

Winners

- Georgia Family – Friendly Partnership School *title of distinction*
- A *welcome mat* and *plaque*
- *Press release* from the GaDOE
- *Letter of Recognition* from the School Superintendent
- Recognition in *spotlight award publication*
- Special *professional learning opportunity* provided by the Ritz-Carlton

Georgia Family Friendly Partnership School Awards



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Application

1. Section A: *School Information*
2. Section B: *School Data*
3. Section C: *Parent Survey*
4. Section D: *Short Answer*
5. Section E: *Attachments*
6. Section F: *Essay*



2012 Award Application Packet

The Georgia Family – Friendly Partnership School Awards are annual awards that recognize Title I schools for their exceptional commitment to fostering welcoming environments that encourage families to become active partners in improving student achievement and success.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Georgia Parental Information and Resource Center (GA PIRC) launched the Georgia Family – Friendly Partnership School Initiative in the summer of 2010 to assist schools, families and communities in working together to create welcoming environments throughout Georgia's varied school communities. A welcoming environment increases family engagement which, in turn, helps students earn better grades, graduate from high school and enroll in post secondary education. This award takes the initiative a step further by recognizing schools that have gone above and beyond to create an environment where families and community members feel they belong, and in turn, play an important role in supporting their school student success.

Application Deadline

Completed application packets must be received on or before 5:00 p.m. on

Thursday, May 10, 2012

Learn more at:

<http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Georgia-Family-Friendly.aspx>



It's On the Website...



www.gadoe.org

Search this site...



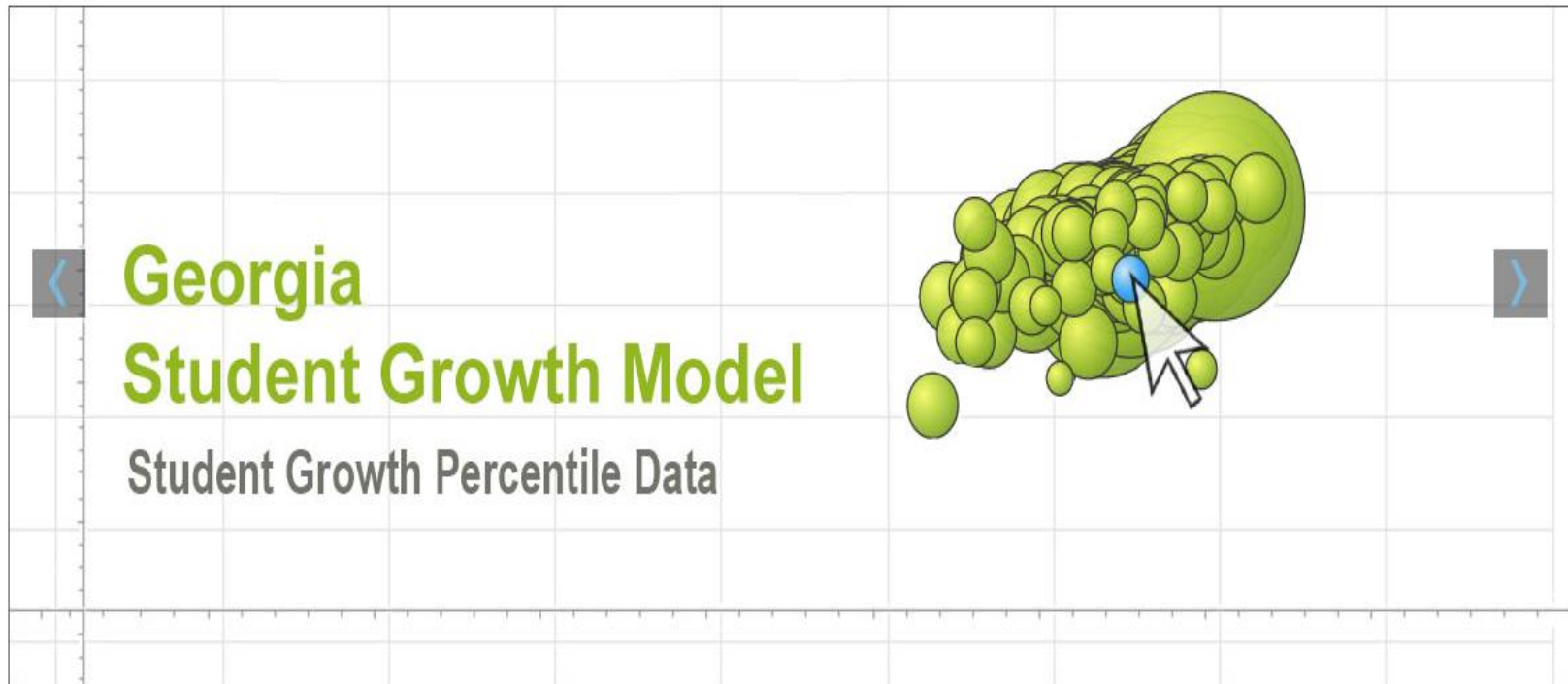
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NEWS & ALERTS

Superintendent Woods on his first official school visits



It's all Online...



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Parent Engagement Program



Parent Engagement is an ongoing process that increases active participation, communication, and collaboration between parents, schools, and communities with the goal of educating the whole child to ensure student achievement and success.

The Georgia Department of Education's Parent Engagement Program ensures that Title I, Part A parental involvement regulations are met with meaningful and strategic actions to build parent capacity as mandated by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Schools and districts must ensure that strong strategies are in place to: 1) build capacity to involve parents/stakeholders in an effective partnership with the school; and 2) share and support high student academic achievement.

The research is clear that when schools and families support each other,

Contact Information

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The Georgia PIC Network Blog

Parent Engagement Programs' Links

- [PIC Network Information](#)
- [Parental Involvement Compliance Documents](#)
- [Parent Engagement Month 2014](#)
- [Academic Parent-Teacher Teams \(APTT\)](#)
- [Parent Engagement Resources](#)
- [Parent Engagement Publications](#)
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...and more!



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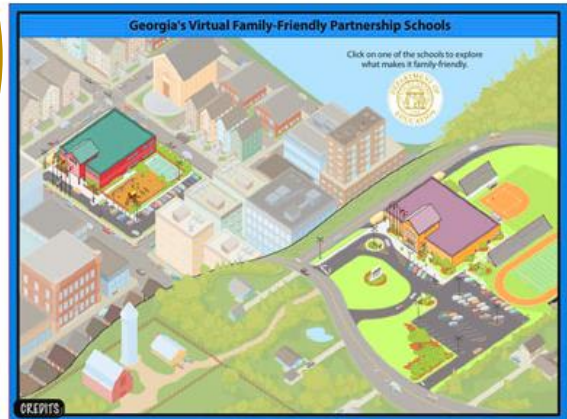
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Georgia's Family-Friendly Partnership School Initiative

**Handouts
&
Downloads!**



Why Create A Family-Friendly Partnership School?

According to the book *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide for Family-School Partnerships* by Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Davies (2007) welcoming environments provide parents with a reciprocal

Contact

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Handouts

- 2015 Georgia's Family-Friendly Partnership School Awards!
- Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Award Handout
- 2014 Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership Schools Awards Booklet
- Welcoming Environments Overview Powerpoint
- Welcome Letter

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Georgia Department of Education

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Questions?