

Supporting the Whole Child

Understanding the Why

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Kathy Simmons, Parent Mentor, Dodge County Schools



Kathy Simmons

The parent voice is critical to improving outcomes for our students. Family engagement describes what families do at home and in the community to support their children's learning and development. It also encompasses the shared partnership and responsibility between home and school. Becoming a Parent Mentor in 2003 offered me so many great aspects of enrichment.

Not only did I obtain knowledge that supported my son's educational process, but it supported other families as well. My experience as a parent of a child with a disability has given other parents a level of comfort in sharing with me their struggles and triumphs. By building relationships, I am creating a welcoming environment that will help parents to partner with the educational

team. At times, other resources are needed to improve quality of life at home and/or at school. This occurs even beyond school years in the form of waivers to keep young adults in the community and in their homes. I provide the parent perspective and support for all exceptionalities and all ages. The mission of the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership is to build effective family, school, and community partnerships that lead to greater achievement for students, especially those with disabilities.

Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students is vital to bring together the school district collaboration necessary to support the whole child. So many great initiatives are taking place within the school, community and family. By helping to identify them under one umbrella, strengths and weaknesses are shared with everyone involved. Challenges and barriers can then be a focus of everyone.

For more information about parent mentors and how to get involved, visit www.parentmentors.org for more.

District Spotlight

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Houston County School District values family and community engagement. Every school has an advisory council made up of parents and business members. The district's family and community engagement inclusive prototype includes thinking outside the box to make sure everyone feels included. "Recent campaigns include Land the Job You Love to recruit highly-qualified employees; 13 Reasons Why Not, a campaign of hope and resiliency featuring 13 of our very own students, staff and graduates; and I Believe in You, a video series showing our commitment to educate the whole child by encouraging them inside and outside of the classroom," said Monica Smith, coordinator of Student Services.

The district's motto of "All Means All," is heard loudly and clearly by parents and stakeholder groups. Families and community partners are invited to participate in surveys and offer feedback on how the district performs in many areas. Houston educators use the valuable input to plan for continuous improvement.

"We offer a welcoming climate and memorable activities. Parent-teacher conferences and transition events are offered to all families

throughout the school year," said Carla Thorpe, family engagement coordinator. "We believe that student outcomes will improve as information and resources continue to be shared."

"Our district involves families through school councils, parent surveys, and social media," said Zabrina Cannady, assistant superintendent of Student Services. "We act with transparency, sharing school and system data through our website, informative banners, and a district dedicated television channel."

"Our Superintendent briefs the community on the state of the school system every year. When it is time for our Superintendent and Board of Education to make crucial decisions impacting students, we schedule public town hall forums to get community feedback," said Cannady.

According to Smith, Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students will help connect and advance the relationship between families and educators. "A Multi-Tiered System of Supports will negate the one-dimensional view of the role schools have played in the past and help create a new multi-dimensional vision in which schools, families, and communities work together to support ALL students," Smith said.

Integrating Our Work

Systemic Family Engagement

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

"Integrating family and community engagement into Georgia's MTSS brings attention to the importance of parents and community partners in a child's educational success," said Amy Song, Family-School Partnership program manager. "The impact of MTSS on students will yield stronger partnerships with parents and a parent is often a child's first teacher."

Family and community engagement is essential to implementing Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students and Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement.

"Within this system, there are six structures or standards which are based on the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) [Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#). School systems in Georgia have been using these six standards to engage families and community partners and improve outcomes for all students," Song said.

It is good practice and also a federal requirement for school systems to jointly develop a Parent and Family Engagement policy or plan.

"Asking parents and other stakeholders for their input is essential for school staff and families in supporting the whole child," said Song. "We define parents to include any caregiver who assumes the responsibility for nurturing and caring for a child's entire well-being consisting of educational, emotional, spiritual, and physical health. When there's a caring adult in a child's life, it makes a difference in the readiness of a child 'to learn, live, and lead'."

To learn more about building a family and community engagement plan, visit [Family-School Partnership Program website](#).



Improving Behavioral Outcomes

PBIS Awareness Week

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS & SUPPORTS

Bibb County School District's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team hosted a PBIS Awareness Week Kick-Off at Miller Magnet Middle School on December 10, 2018.

Local members of the media, family and friends were invited to the celebration

The kick-off and awareness week is intended to encourage and celebrate positive behaviors while educating stakeholders about PBIS. As part of the kick-off, Shaun Golden, a former University of Georgia basketball player and college coach, spoke to students about his Golden Opportunity Program, a non-profit mentoring program.

Visit [Georgia's PBIS](#) for more or follow [@GaDOEPBIS](#) on twitter.



MTSS Resources

MTSS Family Guide & Key Terms

In an effort to improve our children's academic development and well-being, Georgia's MTSS team has created [A Family Guide](#) to help educators establish a common language and communicate Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students. The one page summaries were created to advance conversations between teachers and parents, along with the [MTSS Key Terms](#) guide, which defines and explains the essential components of the framework to enhance a deeper understanding about Georgia's MTSS.

The materials will also be made available in Spanish.

Cohort 2 Announcement

Georgia's State Schools and six districts have been invited to participate in Georgia's MTSS Cohort 2.

Applicants completed in a competitive application process that involved an expert panel of evaluators who reviewed and rated applications,

Click [here](#) to view the selected districts.

Family Engagement Resources

Engagement Resources

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

The Family-School Partnership team has created school transition resources to help school staff and students

Did You Know?

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Parent and Family Engagement Policies are due with the school system's submission of the 2019-2020 Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP) to the Georgia Department of Education by July 31.

Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students

Georgia's MTSS

Karen Suddeth

SPDG Project Director

Phone: 404-656-6058

Email: ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us or

gamtss@doe.k12.ga.us

Georgia Department of Education

1770 Twin Towers East

205 Jesse Hill Jr. Dr., SE

Atlanta, GA 30334

www.gadoe.org/TieredSystemofSupports

Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students

This initiative is funded by a five-year State

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Programs (OSEP).



Engagement Training

GEORGIA PARENT MENTOR PARTNERSHIP

Parent Mentors help build effective teams with family's and educators which lead to greater achievement for students with disabilities.

Visit [Parent Mentor Partnership](#) for resources for school and family resources, and online training.

Engagement Supports

PARENT TO PARENT OF GEORGIA

Parent to Parent of Georgia offers a range of services to families, ranging from connecting families who have similar experiences to helping families explore information about diagnosis or community life and transitions.

To learn more about the organization visit the [Parent to Parent of Georgia](#) website.