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Georgia School Boards Association
 5120 Sugarloaf Parkway
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www.gsba.com

Savannah is the Place to be in June to Earn Mandated Training Credits for FY10

By law, Georgia's veteran school board members must receive six hours of training a year. New school board members must receive 12 hours of training. Have you gotten your training credits this year?

The Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA) provides the most comprehensive training program for school board members in the state. For FY09, the pre-conference training sessions offered this June 10-11 will be the last opportunity to get annual training credits from GSBA.

"For any board member who hasn't gotten their annual training for this fiscal year, the pre-conference workshops will be their best bet to fulfill this requirement," said Tony Arasi, GSBA director of professional development. The upcoming pre-conference workshops are being held prior to the GSBA Summer Conference and Delegate Assembly at the Hyatt Hotel in Savannah.

So what's on the menu for training options? On Wednesday, June 10 and Thursday, June 11, the GSBA New Board Member Orientation will be offered. This workshop provides the mandated six hours of instruction on school finance. Many other topics are included such as: school law for board members, roles and responsibilities, using data in the decision-making process and more.

On Thursday, June 11, two additional workshops are included: the GSBA Communications Workshop and the GSBA Policy Workshop.

This year's Communications Workshop focuses on conflict resolution and mediation skills. The Justice Center of Atlanta is conducting the training, which is limited to the first 150 registrants.

This year's Policy Workshop will cover policy implications of the 2009 General Assembly, new state rules and regulations on IDEA and other issues, school district

records, policy implications of federal and state court decisions, and how to run legal and efficient meetings.

The Summer Conference and Delegate Assembly, while not providing training credits, will offer school board members the opportunity to complement what they've learned in training sessions. It is also the time that GSBA holds its annual business meeting to decide legislative positions and elect officers. Included in this issue of Agenda are two articles that highlight the two keynote speakers for the conference - Dr. Crystal Kuykendall and George G. Thompson.

It's important to note that registering for the Summer Conference and Delegate Assembly doesn't automatically register someone for the pre-conference workshops and vice versa. If a board member, superintendent or other person wants to attend the workshops, they must register for them separately.

Throughout the year, GSBA offers numerous opportunities for board members to receive their annual training credits. The association holds regional workshops all around the state on topics such as Ethics, Board Chair Training and School Finance. The GSBA Professional Development staff also leads custom board retreats with individual districts. The June pre-conference workshops round out the training year. Go to www.gsba.com to register for the New Board Member Orientation, Communications Workshop or the Policy Workshop. While there, register for the conference, too! **GSBA**

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President's Message

Are You Ready for the Next Challenge?

– By GSBA President Julia Bernath



by Julia
Bernath

The 2008-09 school year has certainly been a challenging one! Economic conditions have impacted every school system in our state, and conditions have been slow to improve. Throughout the challenges we have faced, there is one constant that can assist in helping us keep focus. The first day of school next year, about 95 percent of Georgia's children between the ages of 5 and 17 will show up at a public school. That's an estimated 1.6 million children! Certainly, school boards across Georgia are impacting the future, and our work does not end with the school year.

In the face of budget cuts and revenue shortfalls not seen in recent history, school boards and school districts, in spite of everything, must approve budgets – balanced budgets in Georgia – and have teacher and staff contracts signed. We still must plan for building projects, new textbook adoptions, and replacing old buses. A system must be in place to ensure budgetary reserves to cover payroll and additional reductions in state and local revenues. Legal mandates such as the Individual With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) must be fully funded – with local money where state and federal funds have fallen short.

While revenues are dwindling, progress needs to be made on closing the achievement gap and raising achievement levels in math, science, social studies and language arts. And, we should pay attention to providing the appropriate amount of arts and health education for our students. Don't forget the research on offering students instruction in foreign languages...they do better in math and science when they are exposed to this kind of instruction throughout their schooling.

Public school districts also have the important responsibility of providing breakfast to hungry children and nutritionally sound lunches for all. School boards and districts owe their communities safe and sound facilities in which to educate youth and provide the community with places for continuing education and, sometimes, recreation. Even though central office support usually amounts to only single digit percentages of the total budget and many of these positions are being cut, we are asked to maintain the level of service to all those needing information, reports and documentation.

At the same time, state legislators would like to expand the voucher program, reduce revenue generating programs and continue to attempt to create mandates on issues such as school attendance zones when local decision-making would be more effective. Some groups have attempted to separate school board members from other public officials and create a different set of laws surrounding qualifications for candidacy, legal requirements and loss of office for impropriety. (If these mandates are good for school board members, aren't they good for ALL public officials?)

Yes, it's daunting and even a little defeating. Folks might think that nothing good is happening in our schools. But a quick glance in the online newsroom of the GSBA website under "Good News," highlights such wonderful school events as:

- Metter Elementary School (Candler County) received excellent ratings on the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) study.
- Special Education teacher Dave Martinez (Cherokee County) was named the National Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year by the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD) and the Adapted Physical Activity Council (APAC) for 2009.
- The Georgia Future Problem Solving Program announced that two teams from Gordon Lee Middle School (Chickamauga City), coached by gifted teacher Michelle Lewis, placed 2nd and 3rd in the Community Problem Solving Competition. The 2nd place team was also invited to attend the Future Problem Solving Program International Conference in Lansing, Michigan.
- North Clayton High School (Clayton County) hosted the 4-A Literary Meet in March earning 2nd place for outstanding performance with four students advancing to the State Literary Competition. Demarcus Bell won out of 18 schools for the Boy's Essay State Champion, scoring 97 and 98 on his essay.
- The Osborne High School (Cobb County) JROTC Leadership Academic Team recently won first place in the 2009 Army JROTC Leadership Academic Bowl.
- Coffee High School (Coffee County) Freshman Campus FCCLA won the state award for its Career Connection Project.
- Greenbrier High School (Columbia County) senior Emily Bragg was named the Region 7 STAR Student having scored a perfect 2400 on the SAT.
- Davis Elementary School (Dade County) had two students (Reagan Carter -kindergarten and Emily Tillman-3rd grade) to win the county competition in the Young Georgia Authors Contest.
- Elizabeth Andrews High School (DeKalb County) students Anthony Clark and Curtis Farley placed 2nd in Multimedia and 3rd in Animation, respectively, in the State Technology Fair.
- Westlake High School (Fulton County) has been recognized for its innovative design and construction by Stratton Publishing & Marketing, Inc. and the National School Boards Association.
- Sonoraville Middle School (Gordon County) recently captured first place in College Bowl competition at Dalton State.
- Gwinnett County Public Schools has been named one of five urban school districts nationwide as a finalist for the 2009 Broad Prize for Urban Education.
- Harris County teacher Merrill Boynton-Cheyne is one of the top five finalists for Georgia Teacher of the Year.
- Mossy Creek Middle (Houston County) won first place at the MATHCOUNTS competition held at Macon State in February.
- William Eubanks, a Marietta Sixth Grade Academy (Marietta City) student and PTSA Reflections ➔ **Continued on the back**

Executive Director's Message



Ethics is the Focus of Special GSBA Task Force

– By Jeannie M. (Sis) Henry, GSBA Executive Director

In the spring of 2008, the GSBA Board of Directors approved a new strategic plan focusing on a number of areas of importance. One of the priorities set by the Board was to "develop processes and procedures to assist boards that have departed from acceptable standards." Part of the urgency behind conducting an in-depth review of how boards operate ethically was the "negative perception" that some board members in Georgia are straying from ethical boundaries.

In the summer and fall of 2008, GSBA held focus groups across the state asking superintendents and board members a series of questions concerning ethical behavior. Participants were also given a list of unethical behaviors generated by board members and superintendents from across the state and asked to add or delete behaviors they felt were unethical. The final list included but was not limited to the following:

- Nepotism
- Solicitation of political donations from special interest groups

- Admonishing staff or other board members in public
- Ignoring the unethical behavior of others
- Conducting personal investigations of system issues
- Sexual harassment
- Disregard for the chain of command
- Abuse of executive session
- Lack of transparency in hiring practices
- Micromanagement
- Letting personal agendas interfere with the business of the board

In the winter of 2008, a task force consisting of board members and superintendents from across Georgia was established by GSBA President Julia Bernath. The purpose of the group was to review the current work done by the association in the area of board ethics and to make recommendations concerning ways to strengthen GSBA's services.

➔ Continued on page 7

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Latest Version Provides Tool to Analyze Cost Savings

In March, eBOARD 2.0 was launched across Georgia and other states where eBOARD is being used. For those districts not using eBOARD, it is an online service for managing meetings, strategic plans, and policies. The primary new features of eBOARD 2.0 include:

1. New Strategic Plan Module
2. More Efficient User Management
3. RSS feeds of meeting agendas, minutes and news
4. More efficient workflows for meeting agenda preparation and administration
5. And, a new cost analysis tool to demonstrate the savings a district can realize through utilization of the service.

Cost Analysis

A spreadsheet is accessible in the new version of eBOARD that allows a district to input variables such as numbers of meetings, meeting packets, copies and staff time to determine savings and efficiencies. One district estimated their savings at over \$20,000 – after taking into consideration the cost of the eBOARD service. That figure only accounted for the school board meetings. One subscription to eBOARD allows a district to use the service for all meetings – school board, central office and local school and PTA meetings, for example. For more information on this tool, go to www.eboardsolutions.com to find webinars on the topic, or contact Diane Sandifer at dsandifer@gsba.com for more information.

New Strategic Plan Module

The Strategic Plan Module takes continuous improvement to a new level by offering a one-of-a-kind solution for monitoring, tracking, managing and reporting on strategic plans. With eBOARD's Strategic Plan Module, organizations can effectively communicate plans to all stakeholders and allow employees to focus on their areas of responsibility while understanding how their work fits into the overall plan. The module includes a performance measurement component, ability to create multiple plans for one organization, advanced search functions, and a strategic dashboard that creates a graphical representation of performance measurements. The Strategic Plan Module joins other eBOARD modules including the Meetings Module, Policy Module, Documents Module and Communications Module. The total solution creates a governance system that is aligned, searchable and web-based.

More Efficient User Management

As eBOARD's base of users with each district is expanding due to management of multiple types of meetings and strategic plans, the User Administration component of eBOARD now allows for more efficient management for users such as

board members, administrators and staff across the district. It is now easier to manage who has access to the various components for viewing and editing privileges.

RSS Feeds of Meeting Agendas, Minutes and News

This new feature allows board members, staff and the public to subscribe to RSS feeds of meeting agendas and news stories created in eBOARD. Subscribing to RSS feeds provides a more efficient method to keep all stakeholders updated with the latest information from the district and provide for greater transparency.

More Efficient Workflow for Meeting Agenda Preparation

Staff and administrators responsible for the development of meeting agendas (board or any other types of meetings) can more easily assign meeting agenda items to a specific person to provide further details such as "Summary," "Recommendations," "Alternatives," "Details," "Goals Addressed" and "Supporting Documents." This new workflow option will save districts time in the development of meeting agendas as well as costs for paper and delivering agendas to participants.

About eBOARD

eBOARD helps organizations by:

- Providing a single source of access to pertinent data for effective decision-making
- Allowing stakeholder to easily find information through advanced search capabilities
- Saving time and money by streamlining workflow and eliminating paper dependency
- Enhancing communications with all stakeholders

eBOARD Modules now include:

- Strategic Plan – Monitor, track, manage and report on the organization's strategic plan to all stakeholders
- Meetings – Streamline agenda preparation and enhance the effectiveness of all meetings (not just board meetings)
- Policy – Publish policies, regulations and exhibits for easy access by all stakeholders
- Communications – Improve communications with all stakeholders
- Documents – Build an online library for easy access to important documents

For an online video overview of eBOARD, go to:
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School Law Section

– By Harben, Hartley and Hawkins, LLP, GSBA General Counsel



Parental Choice:

The Present and the Future

School board members are well aware of the heated debate in the General Assembly the last several years over the appropriate role of parental choice in determining where and how public school tax dollars will be spent. In 2007, Georgia became the thirteenth state to support some type of private school choice by enacting a voucher program for children with special needs. In creating this program, Senate Bill 10 declared “parents are best equipped to make decisions for their children, including the educational setting that will best serve the interests and educational needs of their children.” O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2111(2)

In 2008, continuing the trend toward private school choice, Georgia enacted legislation offering tax credits for donations made to certain student scholarship organizations. All Georgia students enrolled in public schools are eligible to receive such scholarships (largely financed through these credits) to attend private schools. That move by the Georgia legislature was touted by supporters as a “huge step” toward universal school choice. During that same session of the legislature, SB 458, a bill that would have allowed students to choose any public school or receive a scholarship for a private school if the student’s current school or school system loses accreditation or has been in needs improvement status for six years or more, was proposed, but failed.

Of course, this year’s session of the General Assembly saw the introduction of SB 90 designed to provide all parents with “universal” school choice. The bill sought to provide the option of private school vouchers or “scholarships” to all parents. But almost lost in the debate over public funds flowing to private schools was the universal public school choice

contained within the bill. Under this part of the proposal, parents had the right to send their child to another school of their choice within the school district in which they reside or in a school district different from that of the student's resident school district. The bill included certain restrictions on this universal public choice. For example, the parent would have been responsible for providing transportation and would have to sign a contract with the receiving school agreeing to comply with the rules of the program, at the risk of being returned to the home school.

However, two provisions of the bill were cause for additional concern for local board members. First, the local school council was vested with the responsibility to make "policy" to determine how students would be accepted into the school within the school district. Nothing in the law or history of school councils in Georgia suggest that they have such decision-making, as opposed to advisory, authority. Second, school districts receiving choice students from other districts would have been entitled not only to the obvious FTE state funds attributable to that student, but also to "a proportional share of local revenue" from the home district. These local funds would be distributed through the state in a process virtually identical to that developed for commission charter schools under HB 881 passed by the 2008 General Assembly.

While SB 90 was getting lots of public attention in the Senate, HB 251 was introduced in the House, designed solely to allow parents of students in public school to enroll in any school in the school district in which the student resides if the desired school had classroom space available after its assigned students have been enrolled. As everyone knows, SB 90 never made it to the floor of the House for a vote during this session, but HB 251 passed on the fateful fortieth day. Of note, is an unsuccessful attempt on the Senate side to add, to this bill the provisions for district to district transfer that were in SB 90, including the funding provision.

As passed, HB 251 requires parents exercising choice within the district to provide transportation to and from the

desired school, but allows a student transferring to continue at the desired school until the student completes all the grades of that school. Other important requirements of the bill require that each school district:

- ☑ No later than July 1, 2009 must establish an "universal streamlined process" available to all students to implement the transfer requirements under this bill, that includes, at a minimum, the "model" to be developed by the State Department of Education;

- ☑ Must give a deadline to all students to submit transfer requests;

- ☑ Must annually notify the parents of each student, prior to each school year, by letter, electronic means, or by "other such means" in a timely manner of the options available under this bill; and

- ☑ Must notify parents by July 1 of each year which schools have available space and which of these schools parents may choose to request a transfer for their children.

At the end of the last day right before passage, nepotism provisions applicable to board members and superintendents were added to HB 251. At press time, HB 251 was awaiting action by the Governor. However, Georgia boards of education must be aware of a legislative agenda that seeks to mandate maximum parental choice options. The battle over private school vouchers is an important one where the spotlight must remain bright. While GSBA and other groups have favored the development of public school choice options for parents at the local level, legislatively imposed public school choice, especially when it includes funding consequences, must also be scrutinized carefully to insure that the constitutional authority of local boards to manage and control the public school system in the local district is not diluted. *GSBA*

➤ Continued from page 4 | Ethics is the Focus of Special GSBA Task Force

Task Force Members include:

- Al Abrams, Bibb County Board Member
- Wales Barksdale, Rockdale County Board Member
- Julia Bernath, Fulton County Board Member (GSBA President)
- Shirley Brooks, Ben Hill County Board Member
- Dr. Gayland Cooper, Rome City Superintendent
- Skip Dawkins, Houston County Board Member (GSBA Past President)
- Dr. John DeCotis, Fayette County Superintendent
- H.F. Johnson, Appling County Board Member
- Leonard McCoy, Colquitt County Superintendent
- Deloras Moon, Jones County Board Member
- Sharon Patterson, Bibb County Superintendent
- Dr. Barbara Pulliam, Greene County Superintendent
- Charles Ragsdale, Harris County Board Member
- Catherine Reeves, Fulton County Board Member
- Dr. Paul Shaw, White County Superintendent
- Dr. Edwin Smith, Troup County Superintendent

- Dr. Steve Smith, Lowndes County Superintendent
- Joe White, Mitchell County Board Member (GSBA President Elect)

Task Force members have spent a tremendous amount of time on this critical initiative researching what other states are doing to address the problem of unethical board behavior and discussing possible areas for GSBA to pursue. Although the Task Force has not completed its work, it appears that several recommendations will be made in the following areas:

- Sample Code of Ethics;
- Sample Conflict of Interest Policy; and
- Possible mediation service offered by GSBA.

The Task Force plans to present their findings to the GSBA Board sometime in early summer. I want to express my appreciation to all of the Task Force members for their time and dedication to this issue. *GSBA*

By the Consent of the Governed

– By Angela Palm, GSBA Director of Policy



by Angela Palm

Over the last year GSBA has periodically updated members on the work of the Commission for School Board Excellence, initiated by the State Board of Education, and the resulting legislation from the Governor, SB 84. As this bill goes back to the House next year, it is important to understand the magnitude of the changes being discussed.

SB 84 is as much about a philosophical change as it is about legal changes.

The work of GSBA centers on teaching and supporting excellence in governance, so we have no quarrel with conflicts of interest policies and codes of ethics. We do disagree with the philosophical shift presented in this bill. We question declaring school board members to be a unique class of elected officials that should be subject to a special set of rules. Each group of elected officials has a different job. There are levels of government and branches of government to create a system of checks and balances. Serving the public interest is a high calling for all officials. All of them are expected to serve with honor and integrity.

When voters find their elected officials lacking, they have the authority to recall them. The Declaration of Independence states that governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed. The Georgia Constitution, the way the people of Georgia have consented to be governed, mentions only one method of removal of elected officials from office except in the case of an official committing a felony – the recall process. Voters have the right and the responsibility to hold their elected officials accountable for their behavior. They have not consented to have someone else make this choice for them when no crime has been committed.

Supporters of SB 84 say the recall process is broken and unworkable. It would seem that, in that case, the General Assembly has a responsibility to fix the problem. A broken process of this importance makes a sham of the Constitutional provision. If, regardless of this, legislation is used to create an intervention between the voters and those they elected, the choice of who represents them should revert to the people as quickly as possible.

Most school boards have codes of ethics and conflict of interest policies now. Some boards require these policies be reviewed annually; some require the policy be read and signed annually; some include a pledge and require that it be repeated or signed annually. Few of the policies have sanctions for failing to comply, and perhaps that is a missing piece of the structure. We believe the local boards, following all the transparency laws involved, should be responsible for creating their policies, designing any process for determining if a violation occurred, and selecting any sanctions to be imposed. It is up to their communities to hold them accountable for the choices they make. If there is a state role to play, it would simply be to ensure those policies are in place.

Finally, accreditation is an odd measure to select as a trigger for the extraordinary actions proposed in SB 84. Accreditation is voluntary and there is no direct state funding for it. It was designed to be a peer review process of the quality of education offered, to bring some uniformity to the opportunities available to students. Accrediting agencies are private membership organizations, not public agencies. Accreditation simply means a school or district has met the requirements to be a member of that organization. Probation often indicates a need for professional development for the district leadership team; it does not necessarily indicate failure or total dysfunction. If the General Assembly believes that loss of this voluntary membership, paid for largely with local dollars, should result in state intervention, it should be defined very narrowly with checks and balances in the process.



One of the unique characteristics of our country is the strong belief in keeping as much of the decision making power as close to the people affected as possible. This, however, requires the willingness of the people to participate in the governance process, to be vigilant of their elected officials' actions. Any legislation should strengthen the ability of the community to address, or at the very least participate in addressing, solutions to local problems. Legislation is never just a "fix" for a current situation but is a long-term policy decision and in this case a precedent for other local situations. *GSBA*

Think ahead.



Think back to the reason you got into education: The chance to make a difference. But to make that difference — and this is more true today than ever — you have to be open to change. You have to be ready to adopt new ideas and recognize new opportunities. Of course, not everyone will embrace these changes. But for those who do, Apple will be there to make amazing things not just possible, but simple. So go ahead and think about what you want for your students and your school a year from now. And ten years after that. Think big. Think bold. **Think ahead.**

Q&A



with Dr. Crystal Kuykendall

An inspiring motivational speaker and respected author, Dr. Crystal Kuykendall will deliver the opening keynote address at the **2009 GSBA Summer Conference: "School board leadership to bring out the best in ALL students."**

Dr. Kuykendall has worked in public education for some 30 years, first as a classroom teacher, later as a director for the National School Boards Association and now as a resource to educators throughout the country. Dr. Kuykendall holds her Ed. D. from Atlanta University and law degree from Georgetown University. She has worked in a number of Georgia schools and districts sharing her message that high achievement for all students is possible.

Q: What do you see as the main role for school board members today and has it changed?

A: The bottom line for school boards today is how to best improve student performance, motivation and achievement. That's their main job.

Certainly their responsibilities to set and implement policies haven't changed; however, as lay people, they are not able to do that in a way that impacts their bottom line in a positive way without a clear understanding of what works at the school level.

When board members share ideas of effective practices from their districts, they can then talk about how these might be applied to their local schools. This enables board members to have healthy discussions with their superintendent about proposed recommendations to bring about change. Board members then are in a better position to develop and monitor policies that positively impact student learning.

Q: How does the decreased funding issue impact school districts as they strive to make changes to improve student learning?

A: Certainly, the funding issue is a serious concern; however, all the money in the world won't bring about needed changes unless behaviors and attitudes also change.

I plan to address how boards can deal with the loss of finite resources during my presentation.

Q: As you work with boards around the country, do you see any common thread?

A: What I am observing is that school board members want to be more involved in making changes. This doesn't mean usurping the day-to-day responsibilities of the administrative staff.

It does mean that board members have a need to understand education and what it will take to reach all students. For example, are the demographics changing in your district? Do you know if learning is enhanced or weakened for students with different backgrounds by your district's current teaching styles?

You don't really know the level of a student's ability to learn because teachers often teach at their comfort level. The more diverse your student population, the more necessary it becomes to change teaching methods.

Q: What would you say to critics who maintain that school boards are obsolete?

A: School board members are more important than any of them realize. Their lay leadership provides a system of checks and balances with professional educators that is beneficial and ensures accountability. The key to what I am saying is that board members must understand their roles and know where the line divides their responsibilities from those of the administration.

Because, ultimately, the board determines the kind of change that will take place in the schools it governs as well how its policies are implemented, I'll be sharing a definition of leadership in Savannah to help board members better understand their leadership role.

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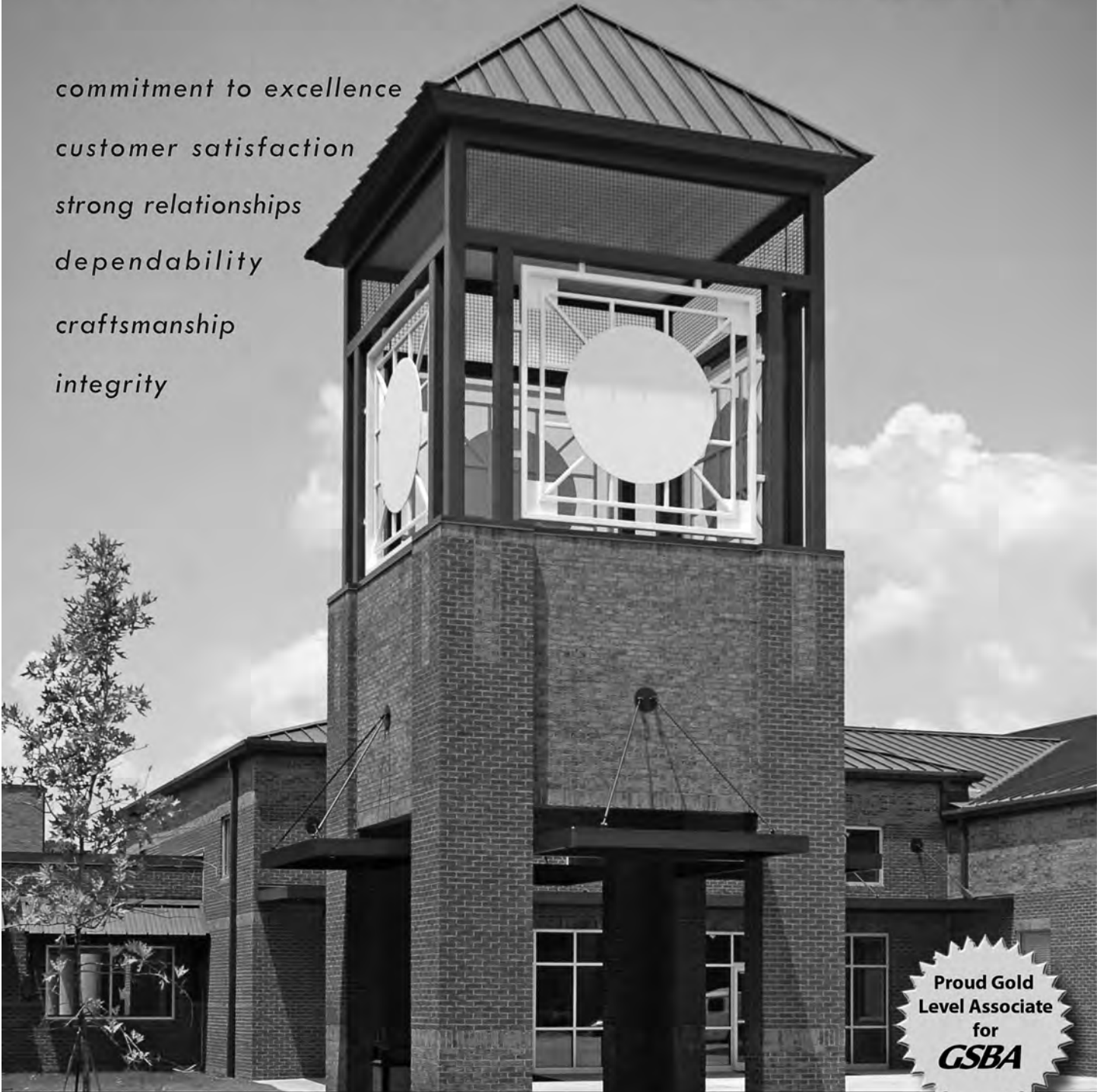
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Q&A



with George G. Thompson

Former Georgia educator George G. Thompson has spent the last 14 years viewing public education from a national perspective. He will speak on “School Boards as Community Leaders” at the **2009 GSBA Summer Conference** breakfast on Saturday morning.

Thompson, who served as Gwinnett County superintendent in the early nineties, is president of the Schlechty Center for Leadership in School Reform, located in Louisville, KY. The center’s work is focused on helping school leaders bring about organizational change.

Thompson and Schlechty Center staff currently are working in several Georgia school districts including Whitfield and Dalton.

Q: What do you see as the main role for school board members and how has it changed?

A: Successful boards are expanding their traditional roles as policy makers. They are recognizing the need to work with their administration to transform schools from bureaucracies to learning organizations.

Leading for Learning: How To Transform Schools into Learning Organizations, a new book by Dr. Phil Schlechty, stresses the importance of the board in working with its community to bring about change. I will be sharing insights from that book with Georgia school board members at the conference.

Q: How does that new role look and why is it desirable?

A: We have found that board members have a sense of mission that frequently meets roadblocks. In other words, the work board members are asked to do is not consistent with the reasons they ran for the board.

We believe boards should move collectively from an internal focus to more of an external one. Helping the community understand public education and building support from

key community leaders are meaningful roles of utmost importance for board members.

Q: How do boards deal with both decreased funding and the increasing demands of state and federal mandates?

A: Unfortunately, boards everywhere face what I call “legislation by the lowest common denominator.” This means that isolated bad behavior on the part of one board in a state often leads to regulation for all.

As Dr. Schlechty points out in his book, while school boards are accountable to their communities, sadly, state and national governmental officials are not accountable to any one when they make decisions impacting local schools.

It is critically important, especially with decreased funding, that boards be crystal clear about the direction of their school districts. This enables them to concentrate squarely on their priorities. The down side is that some boards will use the decreased funding issue as an excuse to do business the same way with little to no sense of direction.

Q: What words of wisdom or encouragement would you like to give board members?

A: Boards are too restricted in their authority to govern. This usually is an indication of a low level of trust from those in higher government positions.

I would like to see boards demand that they be given more autonomy so that they have the right to make decisions and manage resources to meet both the mandates put on them by state and national officials and the needs of the students they serve.

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10 Reasons Why Georgia is a Special State

The following are ten demographic, economic and social factors that make Georgia a unique state. These factors make comparing Georgia to the national average difficult and/or problematic.

– By Doug Bachtel, The University of Georgia

1 Size Georgia is not only a large state geographically, but we have the 9th largest population of any state in the nation. We rank 24th geographically.

Georgia has a large rural population. With 2 million rural residents Georgia's rural population is greater than the combined population of four states. The majority of rural residents, however, are not farmers. Georgia's rural farm population (farmers and their families) number 63,480.

2 Growth Rapid growth. From 2000 to 2007, Georgia was the 4th fastest growing state in the nation on a percentage basis and the 4th fastest growing state on a numeric basis. Approximately 60 percent of the growth was from new people moving into the state, with a majority from other SE states.

3 Diversity Georgia has the 5th largest number and 4th highest percentage of African Americans of any state. The state average is 28.7 percent and the US average is 13 percent. In 2006, the Census Bureau reported that there were 2,799,625 African Americans in the state. Basically, Georgia is a black and white state, but pockets of diversity exist. Officially, Hispanics represent 7.5 percent of the population and number 703,246. Asians account for 2.8 percent and number less than 261,401.

Georgia's minority population is heavily concentrated in a few areas. For example, 53 percent of the African American population lives in seven counties (Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton, Gwinnett, Chatham, Richmond, and Cobb), and 51 percent of the Hispanic population lives in four counties (Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Cobb), and 54 percent of the Asian population lives in three counties (Fulton, DeKalb, and Gwinnett). It takes 16 counties to make up 50 percent of the white population.

4 Age With regard to age, Georgia is a young state. In 2006, only 9.75 percent of the population was 65 and over. The U.S. average is 12.4Percent. The reasons are:

1: Large portion of Georgia's population growth is from new residents, many of whom are in their child bearing years and,

2: Georgia's large and growing minority population tends to be quite young and has high birth rates. For example, the median age of all Georgians is:

- Median age of all Georgians: 33.4 years
- White Georgians: 36.2 years
- African American Georgians: 29.3 years
- Hispanic Georgians: 24.6 years
- Asian Georgians: 23.0 years

Implications of race and age:

Twenty-six counties have less than a 50 percent African American population, yet they have a majority black public school system.

Georgia will, however, have one of the fastest rates of growth of the elderly of any state. From 2000 to 2006, the older adult population went from 787,906 to 912,984. That is a 13.7 percent increase in population 65 and over.

5 Education Georgia traditionally has low educational attainment. In 1940, 81.6Percent of the population in Georgia did not have a high school education. Today that figure is 21Percent. The U.S. average is 19.6 Percent. For example:

2000 Adult Population Without a High School Education

- Total: 21.4 Percent
- White: 18.2 Percent
- African American: 27.5 Percent
- Hispanic: 51.5 Percent
- Asian: 20.5 Percent

6 Economics Georgia has low income levels. In 2006, per capita income in Georgia was \$32,095. The U.S. average was \$36,714. The state ranked 36th for the lowest per capita income in the nation. The state with the lowest per capita income was Mississippi, \$27,028. Of the 159 counties in Georgia, 119 have a per capita income below Mississippi's.

2000 Census Medium Household Income:

- Total: \$42,433
- White: \$47,832
- African American: \$30,998
- Hispanic: \$39,041
- Asian: \$50,496

FIRMS, EMPLOYMENT, AND WAGES Size of business establishments - Over half (53.7 percent) of all the firms in Georgia have fewer than four employees. Only 187 establishments employ more than 1,000 employees.

7 Housing Georgia has a large number of mobile homes. In 2000 (the most current data available) the US average was 8 percent and the figure for Georgia was 11 percent.

8 Health Indicators Birth to unwed mothers - From 1994 to 2006, 37.6 percent of all births were to unwed mothers. Nearly twenty-three (23.6) percent of all the births to white women were to unwed mothers, 40.8 percent of all Hispanic births were also to unwed mothers, and 66.7 of all births in the African American community were to unwed mothers. These figures mean that 50 percent of the students in the Georgia public school system live in single parent households.

Georgia's infant mortality rate - The death of a child under one year of age, was 822.6 (number of deaths per 100,000 population) in 2006. The U.S. average in 2005 was 689.2. Georgia has

a higher infant mortality rate than Singapore, Hong Kong, Spain, Taiwan, and Cuba. African-Americans tend to have higher infant mortality rates than whites.

The cumulative infant mortality rate in Georgia from 1994-2006 was:

- Total: 892.7
- White: 648.0
- African American: 1,421.9
- Hispanic: 451.6
- Other: 390.9

Between 1994 and 2006, 14,435 Georgia infants died.

Georgia is currently in the midst of four epidemics. They are: high school dropouts, diabetes, substance abuse, and gambling. Diabetes contributes to high blood pressure, loss of eye sight, kidney failure, and amputation.

In the 2005-2006 school year, 23,377 9th to 12th grade students dropped out of school. From 1994 to 2006 18,920 people died of diabetes. Between 1994 and 2006, 2,898 people died of alcoholic liver disease (cirrhosis) and 2,647 people died from an overdose of drugs. In 2007, Georgians spent \$3,422,074,908 on the lottery. Only four counties in Georgia spent less than a million dollars in 2007FY on the lottery. Eight counties in Georgia spent over \$100 million dollars on the lottery.

9 Voter Participation

In 31 presidential elections, spanning 124 years, a majority of the eligible voters in Georgia have not cast their vote at the polls. When Jimmy Carter, a native son, ran for president in 1976 and 1980, Georgia ranked 48th and 48th respectively out of the 50 states in the percentage of population voting for president.

In the 2008 presidential election, only 52.1 percent of all eligible voters in the state participated in the voting process.

10 Water Water is becoming a critical natural resource in Georgia. Water is not an inexhaustible resource, particularly in Georgia where the supply is dependent on many factors, many of which are beyond state and local control. The state's water supply is directly tied to population, economic, industrial, agricultural use and growth.

Profiling Georgia's water use is a complex task because of the universal need and extensive use of this resource. Documenting the state's total water consumption is beyond the nature and scope of this report, however the relationship associated with water use and Georgia's population growth is critical to our future. **CSBA**

Doug Bachtel is a Professor in the Department of Housing and Consumer Economics at the University of Georgia. He has a Ph.D. in Rural Sociology and a Masters in Anthropology.

Association News

GSBA Executive Director Sis Henry Wins National Award



Pictured left to right: NSBA Executive Director Anne Bryant, GSBA Executive Director Sis Henry, GSBA President Julia Bernath and GSBA President Elect Joe White.

In January, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) announced that Jeannie M. (Sis) Henry, executive director of the Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA), had been honored with a national award for her leadership, achievement and dedication to public education. Henry, who has led GSBA since 2001, received the Thomas A. Shannon Award for Excellence in School Board Association Leadership on Saturday, January 31 in Washington, D.C. at NSBA's Leadership Conference.

"Sis Henry is a stalwart champion of local school board governance. Her dedication to

school board governance and continuous improvement has impacted not just school boards in Georgia, but school boards all over the country," said Anne L. Bryant, NSBA executive director. "She is highly respected among her peers throughout the country, and NSBA is delighted to honor her with this award." Selection for this award is based on the nominee's extraordinary efforts performed on behalf of the association, advocacy for public education, and relationships with local school board constituencies and the community, including NSBA.

"I was flattered and humbled to receive this award," said Henry. "I believe this honor is a testament to the professionalism, expert knowledge and skill of my staff, and the support and dedication of the GSBA Board of Directors. This belongs to the entire leadership team we've established at GSBA."

Through Henry's leadership at GSBA, the association has dramatically improved its grassroots advocacy activities. She has worked tirelessly to make sure state leaders understand the role and value of school boards in a participatory democracy. Her support of technology and innovative thinking has led to the popular eBOARD products and eBOARDsolutions Inc.,

a wholly owned subsidiary of GSBA that helps school boards throughout the country achieve excellence in board governance, meetings management, and strategic planning.

Georgia Legislature Honors Sis Henry

House Resolution 662 was approved by the Georgia House of Representatives in March. The resolution commended Jeannie M. (Sis) Henry, GSBA's executive director, for her years of dedication and service to public education. The sponsors of the resolution were:

Representative Brooks Coleman (97th)
Representative Tom Dickson (6th)
Representative Melvin Everson (106th)
Representative Margaret Kaiser (59th)
Representative Howard Maxwell (17th)
Representative Fran Millar (79th)

After citing her many contributions to public education and awards earned during her career, Henry was commended for "her sacrifice, foresight, accomplishments, and contributions on behalf of education in Georgia and for the positive influence she has had upon the lives and futures of countless young people in this state." *GSBA*

GSBA's New Strategic Planning Service Assists Three Districts With Long-Range Planning

In FY09, GSBA piloted its new strategic planning service with three districts: Greene County, Murray County and Wayne County. In partnership with the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), GSBA developed a multistep process to guide districts through an intensive strategic planning process. The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) also assisted in the initiative.

GSBA's process begins with a community engagement component that combines the use of an online survey and a community dialogue session. The data obtained through these activities are provided to the Strategic Planning Team named by the district.

Facilitators from GSBA and GLISI lead the team through a process of developing a draft of beliefs, vision and mission using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis and key performance indicators and financial data. The team also develops strategic goals and priorities.

The district then forms action teams to work on performance objectives, measures and targets – the "what" of the process. After public review and adoption by the local board, the board and staff begin to develop initiatives and action steps – the "how" – of implementing performance objectives.

The initial process lasts 6 to 9 months. However, the philosophical idea is that this becomes an ongoing process for the district and that, ultimately, local school improvement plans are tied to the district's strategic plan for alignment throughout the system.

The pilot districts are also using the Strategic Plan Module in eBOARD to document, manage and communicate their plan.

Additional information about the new service will be shared at a break out session during the GSBA Summer Conference and Delegate Assembly. *GSBA*

Apple and GSBA Team Up to Inform and Inspire



The first Apple-sponsored GSBA Technology Leadership Institute was held March 3-4 at the GSBA offices with four districts participating: City of Decatur, Forsyth, Barrow, and Hall County Schools. Keynote speaker Cathleen Richardson of the Atlanta Girls' School began the event. Apple presented a program, "21st Century Learning: Preparing Students for Success," followed by a hands-on exercise with participants using iPod Touches and MacBooks for a demonstration of "Emerging Learning Environments."

Participants enjoyed work-alike group activities as well as breakout sessions by district where they discussed critical issues in ensuring 21st century learning classrooms. Reports from each system provided for sharing of best practices among the districts represented. With a goal of hosting these events quarterly, plans are underway for the next Technology Leadership Institutes in September 2009, and January and March 2010. *GSBA*

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GSBA Standards Program

The first group of boards listed below have submitted the appropriate materials to be designated as a School Board of Distinction. Those listed under “GSBA Standards Boards” have completed criteria for the new standards program. Go to the GSBA website (www.gsba.com) or contact the staff about criteria for Standards and the Boards of Distinction designation.



Boards of Distinction for 2007-2009

Banks County
Barrow County
Ben Hill County
Bleckley County
Brooks County
Bryan County
Bulloch County
Calhoun City
Camden County
Candler County
Carrollton City
Catoosa County
Cherokee County
Colquitt County
Commerce City
Coweta County
Dawson County
Decatur City
Dublin City
Fayette County
Floyd County
Forsyth County
Gainesville City
Glynn County
Gordon County
Habersham County
Harris County
Houston County
Jefferson City
Jefferson County
Jones County
Lamar County
Lowndes County
Lumpkin County
Marietta City
McDuffie County
Meriwether County
Mitchell County
Monroe County
Newton County
Polk County
Pulaski County
Rockdale County
Rome City
Savannah-Chatham County

Tattnall County
Thomas County
Thomaston-Upson County
Tift County
Troup County
Turner County
Valdosta City
Ware County
Washington County
Webster County

Boards of Distinction for 2008-2010

Appling County
Butts County
Chickamauga City
Crisp County
Dade County
Effingham County
Heard County
Lee County
Madison County
Pelham City
Richmond County
Stewart County
White County
Worth County



Standards Boards for 2007-2009

Appling County
Banks County
Barrow County
Ben Hill County
Berrien County
Bleckley County
Bremen City
Brooks County
Bryan County
Bulloch County

Calhoun City
Camden County
Candler County
Carrollton City
Cartersville City
Catoosa County
Cherokee County
Chickamauga City
Clarke County
Clay County
Cobb County
Coffee County
Colquitt County
Columbia County
Commerce City
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Coweta County
Crisp County
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Standards Boards for 2008-2010

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Lee County
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Worth County

Standards Boards for 2009-2011

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Boards of Distinction and Standards Boards must recertify every two years.

For more information on the program visit:

http://www.gsba.com/services/services_standards.html

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City Schools Of Decatur Urges Legislators to Help Save Public Schools

In light of growing austerity cuts and recent legislation indicating a need for public schools to cut back on programs and services, the Decatur-City Board of Education and Superintendent Dr. Phyllis Edwards are urging legislators to help save public schools. Through the district's Save Our Schools (SOS) campaign, Decatur City hopes to bring attention to the underfunding of public education.

At the center of the campaign is a document that clearly explains the school district's funding realities and offers options on what programs and services could be cut to balance the budget. The document serves as a primer on education funding and the difficult funding decisions that school boards are faced with. You can view the document on the school system's website, or go to this link:

http://www.decatour-city.k12.ga.us/fyi/fyi81_files/Save_Our_Schools_Document.pdf

"In Decatur, our mission is to provide rigorous, authentic and engaging learning experiences for all of our students," says Superintendent Edwards. "As a community of learners, we believe that it is vital to stay abreast of legislation that significantly impacts our school system. We hope that the SOS campaign will provide our legislators with insight into the challenges faced by City Schools of Decatur." *GSBA*



Can We Help You?

GAcademy411.org contains important tools for students to use to decide on careers and colleges, apply for financial aid, and prepare for college entrance tests. Students can look up their HOPE GPA and keep track of their eligibility. Additional tools include:

- A **free My 411 account** gives students the full benefits of the website including help filling out applications, test prep and more.
- Students can match careers with their personality, create resumes and learn about financial aid.
- Take a virtual campus tour and get the 411 on colleges including fees and majors offered.

For more information, contact the Client Services department at the **Georgia Student Finance Commission** at (800) 505-4732, or email clientservices@gafc.org.

GSBA Services Directory

Have a question? GSBA staff members are a “mouse click” or a phone call away. Reach staff members at (770)962-2985 or (800)226-1856. The Risk Management Team is also accessible through the same numbers.

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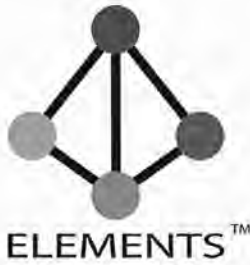
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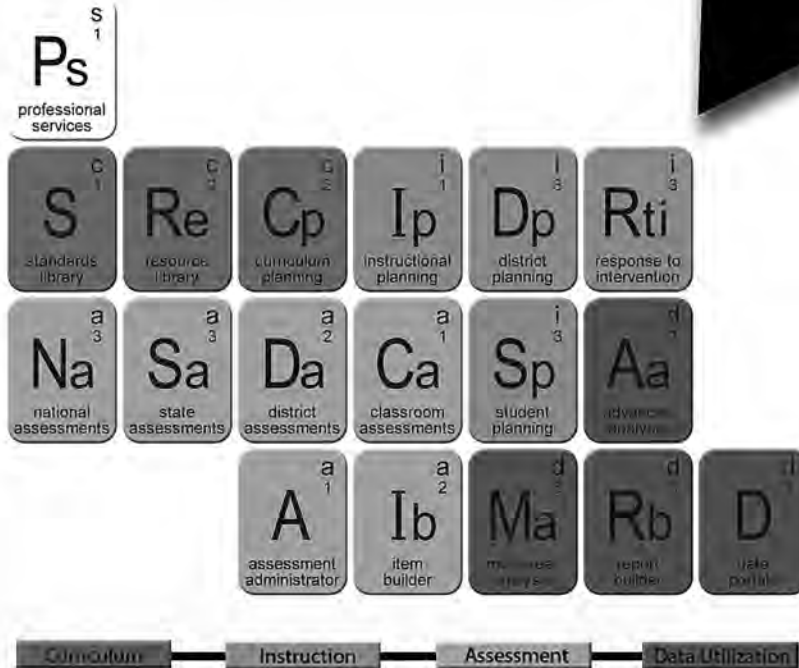
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Agenda is published by the Georgia School Boards Association as a service to its member school boards. GSBA is a nonprofit organization for the state's 180 local school boards, which have joined together voluntarily to improve public education through cooperative effort. The articles published in each issue represent the ideas or beliefs of the writers and are not necessarily the views of GSBA, except where specifically stated.

You are invited to submit articles of 1,000 to 1,500 words dealing with topics of current interest to school board members. The editor reserves the right to determine whether the article is appropriate for readership and/or if space permits.

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The Mission

of the Georgia School Boards Association is to ensure excellence in the governance of local school systems by providing leadership, advocacy and services, and by representing the collective resolve of Georgia's 180 elected boards of education.

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the 2009 **GSBA**

SUMMER CONFERENCE & DELEGATE ASSEMBLY



Savannah, Georgia • June 10-13, 2009

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Winner, recently placed 1st in the state-level judging of the sixth grade film/video production category.

· A team from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), now called AdvancED, visited the Morgan County School System in early March, concluding their four-day visit by recommending that the school system be granted five-year District Accreditation.

· The Alcovy High School (Newton County) FFA Program earned a Silver Ranking in the National Chapter Award Program.

· C.J. Hicks Elementary School (Rockdale County) teacher Nandi Jno-Charles was selected by the National Council of Teachers in Mathematics (NCTM) and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) to attend the 2009 Mickelson ExxonMobil Teachers Academy at the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City.

· Troup High School junior Chelsea Jones was elected as state vice president of business partnerships for Georgia DECA, an association of marketing students.

· On March 20th, Leadership Georgia, a group of businessmen and women from throughout the state of Georgia toured Ware County High School, the state's first Talent Development High School.

School board members I know say they dedicate their time to serving public schools for all the many reasons stated above. These positives can go a long, long way to carrying us through our challenges – extreme as they may be. When these challenges begin to weigh us down, think back to why you became a school board member. Visit a classroom, look into the face of a child, and you will see the reward of your efforts. **GSBA**