

# Rapport ONLINE

for Fulton County School System employees

Vol. 2, No. 3

August 31, 2004

## We're proud of . . .

- **The School Police Department** – for coordinating the Fulton County School System safety plan that was recognized by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA). The plan addresses all aspects of school and student safety, including weapons, drugs, gangs, natural disasters, bomb threats and explosions. Input was gathered from parents, students, and law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services before the formal plan was adopted.
- **Patrick Burke** and the staff of the Planning Department – for their impressively accurate enrollment projections. The 10-day enrollment count this year showed there are 74,393 students in Fulton County – just 0.3% different than Patrick's projection.
- **Our 12 teachers named 2004 Fellows in the Georgia Industrial Fellowships for Teachers (GIFT) program** sponsored by the Georgia Institute of Technology. The following teachers were among 75 throughout the state chosen to work full-time this past summer in a science or math field.
  - **Larrando Alexander**, Tri-Cities HS, facilitated two Tri-Cities students who researched antibiotic resistant bacteria
  - **Kimberley Alston**, Westlake HS, and **Shannon Harris**, Tri-Cities HS, developed materials for AP Chemistry
  - **Arnold Best**, Tri-Cities HS, conducted hormone research
  - **Nathan Booth**, Banneker HS, developed procedures for using SQL database
  - **Linda Dukes**, Tri-Cities HS, researched organic light-emitting diodes



- **Douglas Edwards**, Westlake HS, facilitated three Westlake students who collected data on electronic scrap recycling
- **Kelvin Griffin**, Westlake HS, analyzed data on the number of hits made to certain search engines and computer worms
- **Victor Silvestrov**, Milton HS, conducted research in material science engineering
- **Kenyatta Stacker**, Westlake HS, conducted research in environmental engineering
- **Margaret Tarver**, Tri-Cities HS, facilitated the work of Fulton County and DeKalb teachers in the GIFT program
- **Emily Zeller**, Tri-Cities HS, researched school funding and public policy

## Coming up...

### **REMINDER: Sick leave bank enrollment**

The enrollment period for eligible employees who would like to join the Employee Sick Leave Bank will be from Wednesday, Sept. 1 - Friday, Oct. 1. This is for new members only; employees who are already members of the bank do not need to join again.

Employees are eligible if they earn paid sick leave and have completed at least one full year of employment with Fulton County. Employees who become bank members are required to contribute part of their accumulated sick leave, up to a maximum of five days, to the bank. (The current number of required days is two.)

The bank, which provides members with paid sick leave after their own sick leave has been exhausted, is administered by a Committee of Trustees made up of seven employees. For more information, go to Procedure GBRI, Section C (available under the *Policies* button on our web site). To join the bank, access the Employee

Sick Leave Donation form through Microsoft Outlook, Public Folders, Personnel Services, Forms.

**Free Tutoring Fair** – The Title I Department is sponsoring a Free Tutoring Fair on September 11 for parents to meet providers and sign up for supplemental educational services for their students. This year, in accordance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act, students at Bear Creek, Camp Creek, McNair and Woodland middle schools are eligible for this extra support in reading and math.

The Fair will include free childcare, breakfast and lunch. It will take place from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Saturday, September 11, at Tri-Cities HS. Free transportation from the four middle schools to the fair will be available at 9:30 that morning. If you know students in those schools who could benefit from these services, please encourage them and their families to attend the fair and take advantage of this opportunity for additional academic support.

For more information, contact Bear Creek, Camp Creek, McNair or Woodland middle school, or the County Title I Office at 404-669-8217.

## In the news...

### State seeks public input on social studies and reading/English language arts curriculum

– The Georgia Department of Education is inviting public review and comment on revised versions of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for K-12 social studies and for K-3 reading/English language arts. The curriculum is available on the GDOE Web site at [www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org).

According to the state department, the updated social studies curriculum is quite different than what was originally released to the public in January 2004. The major changes include the following:

- The K-3 curriculum provides a better foundation for the study of U.S. history in fourth and fifth grades.
- The amount of material on Ancient Greece in third grade is limited and focuses on the contributions of Ancient Greece to American democracy.
- Fourth and fifth grade U.S. history courses now include all U.S. history from Native American culture to modern day America. The high school course is a comprehensive examination of U.S. history from colonial to modern times.
- Sixth and seventh grade courses are organized around



world regions. They are historically based, but focus on history needed to understand each region in today's world.

- In all K-8 courses, while history is the focus, geography, civics and economics standards provide for the integration of those disciplines within a history based framework.

The revised social studies curriculum is scheduled to be acted on by the State Board at its October 14 meeting.

The revised K-3 reading/English language arts curriculum also includes significant changes, including:

- More emphasis is placed on reading from the very beginning of a student's education. There is gradual growth towards a combined reading and writing focus by third grade.
- The standards are more grade-appropriate, and more clearly explain to teachers what students should learn and be able to do.
- The curriculum provides a better foundation for the more complex topics that students will be expected to learn in later years.

The State Board is expected to take action on the revised reading/English language arts curriculum at its September 9 meeting.

## SAT scores rise again

The 2004 SAT scores just released by the College Board show that Fulton County high schools raised their overall score by seven points, to 1056, and scored higher than both the state and national averages.

	Fulton	State	National
Verbal	523	493	518
Math	533	494	508

This marks the 11th consecutive year that our overall scores have improved. Over the past five years, Fulton's mean score has increased by 40 points!

Nine of our 13 high schools increased their overall score – four schools increased by 10 or more points in the mean verbal score and eight schools increased by 10 or more points in the mean math score.

Six Fulton schools had average scores over 1100, an increase from three schools last year. Centennial HS topped the county list at 1132, a 38-point increase over 2003. Other high schools with significant gains include Northview (79 points), North Springs (30 points), Riverwood (30 points) Banneker (20 points), Westlake (18 points) and Creekside (12 points).

# Growing from good to great in Fulton County

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from "Are you looking out the window or in a mirror?," an article by educational consultant Rick DuFour in the Summer 2004 issue of *JSD*, published by the National Staff Development Council. While the article specifically speaks to classroom issues, the message applies to all of us. (Reprinted with permission of the National Staff Development Council, [www.nsd.org](http://www.nsd.org), 2004. All rights reserved.)

I was working recently with a high school staff as we explored strategies the school could use to help its students achieve at higher levels. I asked the staff to brainstorm ideas for improving student achievement in their school. The faculty quickly generated the following list [including]:

- More financial support from the state
- Smaller class sizes
- More support staff to assist students
- More planning time and fewer preparations for teachers
- Fewer initiatives from the central office
- Better facilities
- Students with a stronger work ethic and reduced sense of entitlement

At the conclusion of this exercise, I asked that they also consider another list of ideas for improving student achievement. That list included:

- Academic goals for every student that were so clear, focused, and widely understood that students taking the same course from different teachers were ensured the opportunity to learn the same essential curriculum
- Close monitoring of each student's learning on a frequent and timely basis through the use of formative assessments
- A systematic plan to give extra time and support to students experiencing initial difficulty in learning
- Frequent two-way communication between the home and school
- Meaningful and timely information to every teacher clarifying how well his or her students had met school learning goals compared with colleagues' students
- A collaborative culture in which teachers worked together in teams to analyze student achievement on common assessments, developed strategies to improve

the current levels of achievement, and helped each other build on their strengths and address their weaknesses

- A general assumption that it is the school's job to see to it that students learn rather than be merely taught, and the expectation that all students can and should learn at high levels
- A safe and orderly school environment with clear parameters for student behavior, consistent enforcement of those parameters, and an overarching stipulation that members of the school community treat each other with mutual respect.

I then asked the staff to compare and contrast the two lists.

All the proposals on the first list called for someone other than the staff to take the action necessary to improve the school. Staff members themselves could initiate items on the second list.

Educators who honestly confront these facts will face conflicting emotions. On the one hand, it is reasonable and right for educators to convey to the public the urgency of situations they confront and the pressing need for more resources to meet the enormous challenges they face. On the other hand, they also must acknowledge that there is much they can and should do to improve conditions for teaching and learning in their schools.

Ultimately, educators must make a choice between two school improvement strategies. The first strategy, which I call the "if only" approach, bases hopes for school improvement on others. The focus is outward as we look for others to solve our problems.

The other strategy is to focus on the conditions that lie within our sphere of influence. This can-do strategy shifts the focus inward.

Schools that resort to the "if only" strategy spend their time looking out the window for the solutions to their problems. Schools that commit to the can-do strategy spend their time looking in the mirror. Which way are you looking?

## Behind the Headlines...

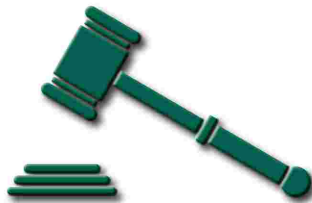
**Georgia Performance Standards (GPS)** – The Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), the new criteria for measuring assessment, instruction and student work in Georgia public schools, are becoming effective this school year. The GPS provide a revised and strengthened curriculum in K-12 English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies to guide both instruction and assessment. The GPS are designed to:

- Set high expectations for all students;
- Meet or exceed national level standards;
- Increase academic rigor through curriculum revision (more depth, not breadth);
- Use curriculum to guide teaching and learning, and
- Align assessment and accountability to curriculum.

The standards are being phased in over the next five years. More information about GPS and its impact in Fulton is available on the System's web site under *F.Y.I.*

## School Board in action

**2005-06 Calendar**—At its August 13 meeting, the Board of Education accepted four proposed options for the 2005-06 school calendar. After considering public input, the Board is expected to approve the 2005-06 school year calendar in September.



**Policy Governance**—On August 26, the Board held a Roundtable on the Policy Governance® model. At that meeting Board members asked the administration to post

drafts of policy governance policies on the County web site so the public could review and comment on them. A Q&A on policy governance is already on the web site.

The Board has spent several months researching the form of leadership known as Policy Governance. Under this model, the Board, with input from representative groups of school system citizens, is charged with establishing clear expectations for student achievement and school system operations. The Superintendent is held accountable for meeting those expectations. The role of the Board is to listen to system owners and to hold the Superintendent accountable for reaching desired results.

To help explain Policy Governance, the school system is planning two Community Information Meetings featuring Dr. John Carver, creator of the Policy Governance Model, along with Board members and Superintendent Michael Vanairsdale. The meetings will be held on Tuesday, September 14, from 3-5 p.m. at Dunwoody Springs ES and from 7-9 p.m. at the Administrative Center.

### Upcoming Board meetings

**September 7**, 4:30 p.m. – Pre-Board meeting, Dunwoody Springs ES

**September 9**, 5 p.m. – Workshop, Administrative Center (tentative)

**September 9**, 6:30 p.m. – Board meeting, Administrative Center

**September 23**, 5-7 p.m. – Roundtable, Dunwoody Springs ES (tentative)

The 2004-05 calendar of Pre-Board and Board meetings, workshops and roundtables can be found on the System's web site under the *Board* button at the top of the front page. Please check the web site frequently for updates.

*Rapport ONLINE is produced every two weeks during the school year and once a month during the summer by the Fulton County Schools Communications Department.*

*For comments, questions or to submit information:  
Ellen Rogalin, 404.763.6830 or Rogalin@fultonschools.org.*

*It is the policy of the Fulton County School System not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age or disability in any employment practice, educational program, or any program, activity or service.*

*If you wish to make a complaint or request accommodation or modification due to discrimination in any program, activity or service, contact Compliance Coordinator Randy Reece at 786 Cleveland Avenue SW, Atlanta, Georgia 30315, or phone 404-763-4585; TTY 1-800-255-0135.*