



SUPERINTENDENT'S END-OF-MONTH NOTES

December 2011

OUR MISSION is to provide educational excellence for all students.



IN THIS EDITION:

- **Tis the Season!** (Note #1)
 - **East Newton Joy!** (Note #2)
 - **Fairview Singers** (Note #3)
 - **Heard-Mixon Elementary School:** Georgia School of Excellence (Note #4)
 - P.R. Awards for **NCSS** (Note #5)
 - State Superintendent Speaks to GSBA (Note #6)
1. I want to take this opportunity to wish you and yours the safest and happiest of holiday seasons and to thank you, once again, for your dedication to the education of our Newton County youth! Tis the season:

I think God might be a little prejudiced.
For once He asked me to join Him on a walk
through this world,

and we gazed into every heart on this earth,
and I noticed He lingered a bit longer
before any face that was
weeping,

and before any eyes that were
laughing.

And sometimes when we passed
a soul in worship

God too would kneel
down.

I have come to learn: God
adores His creation.

■ St. Francis of Assisi



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2. **Speaking of wondrous creations, reading to elementary youngsters is always a joy!** Many thanks to Ms. Tuesday Rawls' 2nd graders at **East Newton** for making the spirits bright for this ole [not "old"] superintendent yesterday! However, they may still be in "culture shock" from Trosclair's version of a *Cajun Night Before Christmas* wherein gators pull the skiff for ole St. Nicklus. (Building background knowledge about Acadians ...) But, there were a few giggles ... Fun, too, to see Principal Coady as the resident Elf on the shelf ... ☺
3. **On Tuesday morning of this week, Mr. Wilhelm Schmidt's Fairview Elementary Choir performed a mini-holiday concert for those of us here at the Board of Education Administrative Offices....and it was spectacularly done by these youngsters!** The kids belted out their holiday songs with gusto! They were to be heard—not small at all ... Well done and thank you ... ☺ (Love the tree ornaments in the BOE made by students in our elementary art classes! Well done and thank you!)
4. **Heard-Mixon Elementary School** made all in the halls of NCSS *very merry* with the announcement that **H-M** has been declared a **2011 Georgia School of Excellence!** One of 13 schools in the state to be recognized for the *Greatest Gains* in Congressional District 8 for the past three years in reading and mathematics, **H-M** is most deserving of this statewide recognition. **CONGRATS** to **H-M** students, staff, and administration under the leadership of Principal Lee Peck!
5. **The Newton County School System's Department of Public Relations received eight awards at the Georgia Public Relations Association Conference held on Monday of this week at the Georgia Technical College in Atlanta!** More specifically, all of the awards—5 "Gold Awards of Excellence" and 3 "Best in Category"—were for publications and other marketing materials for the new **Newton College and Career Academy (NCCA)**. Outstanding and thank you Ms. Davis-Viniard and Mr. Woodard!
6. **As an attendee at the Annual Conference of the Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA) this month in Atlanta, I was privy to a presentation by State Superintendent John Barge regarding Georgia's newly proposed waiver of the federal No-Child-Left-Behind law replacing it with the new Georgia College & Career Readiness Index or GCCRI accountability system.** Among the things Dr. Barge shared were the following:
 - **The Georgia Department of Education expects to hear whether its new accountability system (GCCRI) will gain approval from the federal government before the end of this month.**



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- Disaggregation, with respect to student subgroups, will continue under Georgia's proposal.
- Schools and school systems will be "held harmless" with respect to their current Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status for the current 2011-12 school year. (Then, accountability, with rewards and sanctions, kicks in for the 2013-14 school year.)
- Per the various indicators found on the GCCRI, schools will receive "points" per each indicator of the "primary indexes" for elementary, middle, and high schools, respectively. (Yet GaDOE has not revealed the point scheme at this time.) Additionally, schools will receive "extra points" for indicators met on the so-called "companion indexes" for elementary, middle, and high schools. (Likewise, no word yet from GaDOE what the extra points scheme will look like.)
- Student attendance will now be an indicator against which elementary, middle, and high schools will be measured under the proposed new accountability system. (Dr. Barge explained that research in Georgia has shown a very strong correlation between student achievement and attendance at all levels of education in the state.)
- Under the proposed new accountability system, Georgia will take into account English/language arts, reading, math, social studies, science, and writing rather than just reading and math under the current No-Child-Left-Behind legislation giving greater weight to all four core subject areas. (As noted before, much emphasis will be given to college and career readiness inclusive of SAT, ACT, Dual Enrollment, AP, etc.)
- Under the new proposal, reading achievement will also be measured in "lexiles." More specifically, the state will hold schools accountable for the percent of students scoring greater than the 650th lexile for 3rd graders [on track to be on grade level by end of third grade], the 850th lexile for 5th graders [on track to read well in middle school], and the 1050th lexile for middle schoolers [on track to read well in high school].
- Under the new proposed accountability system, each school will be given a grade up to 100, thus allowing educators, parents, and all other citizens to easily "grade" a school's performance, i.e., we're all familiar with what a 60, 70, 80, 90, and 100 mean ...

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- Also, under the new accountability proposal, the state will bring focus to “high needs” vs. “non-high needs” students within a school and/or against the state average for the same groups. Green, yellow, and red flags will tell this story in the new accountability reports with the ability to click on each flag drilling down to the specific data that speak to the performance of these groups and, thus, allows for better “targeting” of resources and effort.

It will be a most interesting New Year with all of the new accountability measures should Georgia’s proposal to the federal government be approved! Stay tuned.

Once again, wishing you and yours the safest and happiest of holidays! I’m looking forward to seeing those twin grandsons in Florida! ☺

GSM
12/16/11

