



The Parent Connector

TITLE I & SPECIAL ED NEWSLETTER



WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

"In Pursuit of Excellence"

Aug—Sep
2015

CALENDAR

AUGUST

- 5 First Day of School
- 11 Board Meeting 5:30 @ BOE
- 20 EL Night 5:30 @ WPES
- 25 EL Night 6:00 @ YES

SEPTEMBER

- 2 Progress Reports—Qtr I
- 3 EL Night 5:30 @ MES
- 7 Holiday - Labor Day
- 8 Board Meeting 5:30 @ BOE
- 10 EL Night 6:00 @ LES
- 16 EL Night 6:00 @ LHS

OCTOBER

- 2 End of Qtr I
- 5 Student Holiday/Teacher Workday
- 8 Report Cards Issued
- 13 Board Meeting 5:30 @ BOE

"School Climate — Why It Matters"

Did you know that your child's comfort level at school and feelings of safety can actually shape their learning and development? These aspects of school life along with the relationships that students form with peers and teachers work together to form a school's climate. The National School Climate Center defines school climate as the quality and character of school life. According to research, The National Center reports that schools with positive climates statistically have higher test scores and graduation rates than schools with negative school climates where students may feel unsafe or part of a hostile environment.

In response to this profound research, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) created the School Climate Star Rating. The School Climate Star Rating is a diagnostic tool to determine if a school is on the right path to school improvement based upon the school's climate. "Students cannot learn in environments that do not support them," Superintendent Woods said. "Georgia is committed to measuring the quality of its learning climates from preschool all the way through 12th grade."

Georgia is the first state in the nation to include school climate as an early indicator within its College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). The CCRPI is an academic accountability system that communicates to stakeholders how a school is doing with regard to preparing Georgia students for college and career readiness.

The School Climate Star Rating does not affect a

school's CCRPI score, but serves as an additional informational tool for schools, administrators and parents. The School Climate Star Rating utilizes a star rating scale, with 5 stars representing an excellent school climate and one star representing a school climate most in need of improvement. A school's final rating is determined by using a multitude of data. Data is collected from the Georgia Student Health Survey, Georgia School Personnel Survey, Georgia Parent Survey, student discipline records from each school, and attendance records for students, teachers, staff and administrators. All information that is collected from these sources is compiled into four components that are reported as the School Climate Star Rating. These four components are: School Climate, Student Discipline, Safe and Substance-Free Learning Environment and Attendance.

The 2014-2015 School Climate Star Rating for each public school in Georgia is located on the GaDOE website at: <http://tinyurl.com/q9lghtx>

Please take time to review your child's School Climate Star Rating as this is an important tool that can help you to better understand the impact of school culture on student achievement. The GaDOE encourages parents to be part of school improvement efforts by partnering with teachers and principals to build a strong family-friendly school climate. These efforts are a direct way for parents to be engaged in creating a school climate that promotes high student achievement and happiness.

Move On When Ready

In April 2015, the Georgia General Assembly passed a law that streamlined the existing dual enrollment programs. As a result high school students now have more options for earning college credit, a new way to earn a high school diploma and more college costs are free! Contact your School Counselor or Curriculum Director, Celeste Cannon at: meredith.cannon@walton.k12.ga.us to learn more or plan to attend the Winter information sessions about the new **Move on When Ready** program, which will be held at all Middle and High Schools. Dates and times will be announced soon! You can also find out more about this program at: <http://tinyurl.com/nzbj8oq>

Did You Know?

McKinney-Vento Act

If your family lives in any of the following situations: (1) In a shelter, (2) In a motel or campground due to the lack of an alternative, adequate accommodation, (3) In a car, park or abandoned building or bus or train station, (4) Doubled up with other people due to the loss of housing or economic hardship..... your school-age children may qualify for certain rights and protections under the federal **McKinney-Vento Act**. If you believe your children may be eligible, please contact **Gina Meadows, Homeless Liaison at (770) 266-4510** to find out what services and supports may be available.

School-wide Title I Schools in Walton County School System are: Atha Road Elementary, Harmony Elementary, Carver Middle School, Loganville Elementary, Monroe Area High School, Monroe Elementary, Walker Park Elementary, Walnut Grove Elementary, Loganville Middle School and Youth Middle School.

Targeted Assistance School in Walton County: Walnut Grove High School.

The Walton County School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in admission to its programs, services or activities, in access to them, in treatment of individuals, or in any aspect of their operations. For additional information or referral to the appropriate system coordinator, contact the system coordinator: Wilma Widmer at 200 Double Springs Church Road, Monroe, Ga. 30656, or at 770-266-4410.

Si usted necesita ayuda con la traducción de esta carta, por favor comuníquese con la Señora Eleanor Scott en Walton County

10 Ways to Prepare Your Child for School

Starting school can be a difficult time for children. Every child is hesitant to go somewhere new and see people she's never met before. Here are some helpful ways to prepare your child for her first day of school:

1. Let your child know what his schedule will be like. Tell him what time school begins and ends each day.
2. Ask your child about her feelings -- both the excitement and the concerns -- about starting school.
3. Visit the school with your child to see his new classroom and meet his new teacher before

school officially starts.

4. Point out the positive aspects of starting school. It will be fun and she can make new friends.
5. Let your child know that all kids are nervous about the first day of school.
6. Leave a note in your child's lunchbox that will remind him you're thinking of him while he's at school.
7. Reassure your child that if any problems arise at school, you will be there to help resolve them.
8. Try to have your child meet a

classmate before the first day of school so she will already have a friend when school starts.

9. Arrange for your child to walk to school or ride together on the bus with another kid in the neighborhood.
10. Find out about after-school activities that your child can join. Will there be a back-to-school party? Can she join a sports team?

Sources: *American Academy of Pediatrics*; *Caring for Your School-Age Child: Ages 5-12*, by Edward L. Schor (Bantam, 1999)

NEWS YOU CAN USE

- Georgia announces 2015-16 free and reduced-price meal income guidelines: <http://bit.ly/115kF9r>
- 2014 College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) for WCSD and schools is now online at <http://ccrpi.gadoe.org/2014/ccrpi2014.aspx>
- To stay current about all of the tests your child will be required to take, you can access the 2015-16 District Assessment Calendar here: <http://www.walton.k12.ga.us/testingcalendar.html>

District Parent Coordinators

Donna Hawk: ARES, HES, MES, WPES, CMS 770-266-4530 donna.hawk@walton.k12.ga.us - Title I

Kathy Ellington: WGES, YMS, MAHS, WGHS 770-207-3107 katherine.ellington@walton.k12.ga.us - Title I

Tonya McCullohs: LES, LMS 770-266-4532 tonya.mccullohs@walton.k12.ga.us - Title I & Special Education Parent Mentor



The Special Needs Database

Parent to Parent's comprehensive [resource database](#) contains over 5,000 resources in over 150 categories. The Special Needs Database is a user-friendly, online searchable resource available to individuals with disabilities, their families, and professionals throughout Georgia. You can [search online](#) or call them at 1-800-229-2038 and they will search for you!

<http://p2pga.org/index.php/database>

Preschool Special Education Program

If you or your doctor suspect that your 3-5 year old child has a disability, you may contact Melanie Cooksey at 770-266-4502 to schedule a screening appointment at the PEEP Round-Up on September 2, 2015 at Monroe Elementary.

Special Education News

What's Happening

- **August 25 - Walton County Navigator Team Meeting** (10:00 am @ The Bridge of Georgia, 109 Blaine St, Monroe) Everyone is invited! Come be a part of a wonderful group of parents working together to help make a difference in the lives of all Special Needs families here in Walton County!
- **August 27 - G.I.F.T. Get It Forever Together** (6:00 - 7:30 pm @ Loganville Middle School, 4869 Bay Creek Church Road, Parent Resource Center - Room 623) A free hands-on workshop for Parents of children with Special Needs. Learn how to keep up with important school and medical information. Receive information on Medicaid, SSI, Katie Beckett, etc. Bring 1 year of records with you. All other materials and childcare will be provided! Registration is required. RSVP: Tonya McCullohs 770-266-4532 / Beth Morgan 678-684-2970.

New Special Education Director Mr. Jimmy Pitzer



I have worked in both the business world and public education. After graduating from college I worked as a marketing rep for a video distribution company out of New York City. After getting married (to a teacher), I grew tired of weekly travel. I went back to college to become certified to teach interrelated special education, and I just completed my 23rd year in the special education field. I was a special education interrelated teacher in Houston County for 7 years - during which time I served two middle schools. I then worked as a Special Education Program Specialist serving 8 schools at all grade levels in Houston County for 5 years. In 2004 I became the Special Education Director in Houston County in which I served in that position through 2008. I moved to Walton County in 2008 as the Special Education Coordinator serving our secondary schools. I became Special Education Director for Walton County Schools this summer.

For more information and resources, please visit the Parent section on the Special Education Department page on the WCSD's website: www.walton.k12.ga.us or contact the Parent Mentor:

Tonya McCullohs at 770-266-4532 or tonya.mccullohs@walton.k12.ga.us.