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# Update

JUNE 2006

## From The President



Many of my closest friends are classroom teachers. I'm always a little jealous of them at this time of year. They're excited about being out of school for the summer and they never miss a chance to tell me that I choose to work year round! Still, I miss the feeling we had when we were kids, knowing that long, lazy days of summer stretched before us, don't you?

For those of us in professional learning, the long days of summer speak to us a little differently. Many of us are teaching, hardly having time to unpack between one training activity and the next, trying to feed groups with no food budget and, hopefully, modeling the strategies we expect for our teachers to use in their classrooms. In an effort to provide high quality professional learning, we are working to move more toward **job-embedded** professional learning that is results-driven and standards-based. Do you know how well you are accomplishing this work?

Take some time this summer to review your school or system data from the spring administration of the on-line Standards Assessment inventory. This powerful tool, provided by DOE, allows us to put some hard data with our work in professional learning.

In Gwinnett, for instance, my home system, I know that we need to work to improve in the standards of Learning Communities and Evaluation. I have shared these data with our Leadership, with our Professional Learning Advisory Committee and with principals and APs, and work to lead others in planning their professional learning activities with a focus to improving in these two standards. Have you done this?

I know the days of catalogs listing dozens of summer courses are more in summers past than in the summers of the future, though there are still situations where this is appropriate. Working as communities of learners, working within local schools around the learning needs of their own students, teachers will focus on improved student learning instead of fulfilling personal interests. Our goal is that all teachers in all schools will experience high quality professional learning as part of their daily work by 2007. What are you doing about this goal, personally?

My teacher friends, those that call me from the pool to remind me of how much fun they're having, are excited that the learning they are doing in math this summer, for instance, is school-based, among colleagues, and student-focused. As proud as they are each year when school ends and they see the gains their students have made over the year, they should know that MY fulfillment comes from listening to them talk excitedly about THEIR professional learning that is sustained throughout

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learning communities all year long. Now I think I'll kick back and plan a vacation in MAY of next year, a month when EVERY teacher wishes she were at the beach! Have a great summer, and plan to be at the GSDC conference this fall, September 6th and 7th, and at any of the Academy sessions beginning September 8th. You deserve some fun learning too!

*Lea*

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## The Condition of Education 2006

This annual report summarizes important developments and trends in education using the latest available data. The report presents 50 indicators on the status and condition of education and a special analysis on international assessments. The indicators represent a consensus of professional judgment on the most significant national measures of the condition and progress of education for which accurate data are available. The 2006 print edition includes 50 indicators in five main areas: (1) participation in education; (2) learner outcomes; (3) student effort and educational progress; (4) the contexts of elementary and secondary education; and (5) the contexts of postsecondary education. [ <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006071> ]

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## A Pencil is a Word Processor - A Common Sense Approach

Most teachers are well aware of cell phones -- mostly as a nuisance in class, where educators spend a lot of time taking them away from students. Well, you wouldn't take their pencils away, so why confiscate cell phones? Instead of taking them away, Ron Smith started leveraging them as classroom tools. The cell phone may be used as a computation device, a camera, a text-messaging device, a portable storage device, a music player, a word processor, and probably more. Why on earth would he take that from his students? Besides, as you probably already know, it's a losing battle, so why fight it? Of his 150 students, about two-thirds have a cell phone. He has their numbers, and they have his. If students are habitually late to school, he gives them a wake-up call. If students are absent, he sends text messages to ask where they are. If students have a problem they need help with, they get in touch with him directly. He reminds them of upcoming assignments, and other teachers sometimes ask him to get in touch with students of his who also attend a class of theirs.

**\* \* REMINDER \* \***



**Dr. Kay Burke will keynote the 2006 Fall Conference September 6th at the Atlanta Airport Marriott. For the past 16 years, Kay has facilitated professional development workshops throughout the US, Canada, and Australia; delivered keynote addresses; and presented at numerous regional, national, and international conferences. She will customize her GSDC presentation to integrate Georgia's specific standards and benchmarks into checklists, rubrics, and portfolios.**

**REGISTER NOW - EARLY BIRD ENDS JUNE 23rd**

## THE 2006-07 ACADEMY

Enrollment for the Georgia Staff Development Council's 2006-07 Academy is now open. The Academy is designed to:

- Provide participants with knowledge of the research supporting effective professional learning practices and programs;
- Assist participants in gaining knowledge of effective professional learning practices to use in designing, managing, and evaluating a local professional learning program;
- Provide participants with a network of supportive colleagues;
- Provide participants with the planning and facilitation skills to support school-focused professional learning;
- Enhance skills for efficient and effective planning and implementation of professional education;
- Increase awareness of the relationship between professional learning and school improvement; and
- Provide participants with skills to coordinate involvement of teachers and administrators in planning and evaluating the local plan.

The Basic Academy offers *Providing Focused and Sustained Professional Development* - a goal for all professional learners. Professional development means different things to different people. To some, it means one-stop workshops and in-services. In the Basic Academy, participants will learn of much richer ways to enhance professional growth that make a difference in student achievement. Participants will also learn to identify, develop, nurture, and monitor a variety of different professional development experiences that are tied to school improvement.

Participants in the 2006-07 Advanced Academy will have two options this year: *Using Data to Lead Change* and the new offering, *Building and Leading Effective Teams*. Participants *must have* completed the Basic Academy to enroll in the Advanced Academy.

The Data session will help participants to think about data beyond a cursory look at standardized test scores. Participants will be introduced to basic concepts, complete activities designed to reinforce those concepts, and then apply them in classroom and homework assignments.

The new team building session addresses the fact that no school leader succeeds alone. For lasting improvement, school leaders must build and lead highly effective teams. *Why have teams? What separates effective teams from those that are just taking up space? How do you get a team off to a good start? What tools, techniques, and approaches can leaders use to strengthen team effectiveness? How can team meetings be more efficient?* These are questions that are answered for participants in this session.

All educators are invited and encouraged to participate in the 2006-07 GSDC Academy which will form this fall. The learning experienced will impact student performance at your school or system. The Academy meets six sessions during a school year where long range and short range goals are developed and implemented through learned strategies. The strategies learned will help teams of educators effectively impact identified student achievement goals.

An e-mail will be sent to the membership when registration links are available on the Council's web site, [www.gasdc.org](http://www.gasdc.org), under the "academy" link. Seating will be limited: to the first 100 **paid** for the basic Academy (and don't think that's too high because last year's initial enrollment was 127!) Both sessions of the Advanced Academy are limited to the first 40 **paid**. Watch for your e-mail notice.

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## FALL CONFERENCE

The 2006 fall conference will be held at the Airport Marriott, College Park, Georgia. Those that attended the 2005 fall conference know what a great facility this is, what great learning they received and what great food!!

Registration details are available on the GSDC online registration site:

< [www.registereasy.org/?gfc1148556383](http://www.registereasy.org/?gfc1148556383) >

The dates for the conference are **6 & 7 September**. Register now to take advantage of the *Early Bird* registration which ends June 23rd. And remember, last time at this property, the people who waited until the last minute to make lodging reservations were unpleasantly surprised! This is a busy hotel so make your reservations early and ask for the **special GSDC conference rate of \$119**:

Call (800) 228-9290 or

<<http://marriott.com/property/propertypage.mi?marshaCode=atlgp&groupCode=gsdgsda>>

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## Black Students Perform Better If Teachers Set High Goals

A study at one of the county's low-performing high schools found that many teachers pigeonhole students based on their socioeconomic backgrounds and are unwilling to accept responsibility for poor student performance. The study, conducted at an unnamed high school by a University of Maryland professor, said teachers must rid themselves of assumptions that certain students cannot be taught to perform at high levels. "Even in bad circumstances, if you have good teachers, they can still make a difference," said Marvin Lynn, assistant professor at the university's College of Education. Teachers who hold students to higher standards will see better performance, he said, adding, "Students perform better that way, absolutely." The study showed that teachers and administrators at the high school blamed student attitudes, student behavior and inadequate parental involvement for the achievement gap when minority students don't perform as well as their white counterparts. "Teachers didn't see themselves as part of the problem," said Lynn. "We found that troubling ... there was a real "throw up your hands" mentality in the school." Lynn's study said some teachers became hostile when they learned the study was dealing specifically with the poor achievement levels of black males and became more unwilling to talk openly. The research, which took place over an 18-month period, showed a teacher population suffering from a "crisis of faith." "It's not a lack of concern for these kids," Lynn said; "It's a level of frustration." Some teachers are turned off by the hip-hop music and clothing that their students favor. "But teachers need to be taught to get beyond that," Lynn said. "We need to work with teachers more closely to understand these kids." John White, spokesman for Schools CEO John Deasy, said that the new schools chief has listened to concerns from students during his first few weeks on the job about teacher effectiveness. Students have reported to Deasy about gaps in knowledge of some teachers in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Students have also complained about a lack of information about getting on track to get to the AP courses in the first place. "Sometimes, they are finding that not all of their questions are being answered, and sometimes the teachers are having to rely on the course book for answers rather than their own knowledge," White said. "It reinforces his belief that professional development will benefit."

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**Finally! See pictorial highlights of the 2005 Fall Conference and Anniversary Celebration on the GSDC Web site.**