The Georgia School Boards Association

Agenda

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The X Factor: Redefining Leadership, YOU ARE A LEADER
By Dave Weber

Musings of a Recovering School Board Member
By Senator Lindsey Tippins

The Role of the Board in Employment
By Harben, Hartley & Hawkins

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Georgia Senator Lindsey Tippins shares lessons he learned while serving as a school board member.

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See details of the conference and the pre-conference workshops. Register Today!
Georgia’s Constitution, Article VIII, Section I, Paragraph I reads, “The provision of an adequate public education for the citizens shall be a primary obligation of the State of Georgia.” This first line on public education in our Constitution charges each one of us with the responsibility of educating our children to the highest level. It does not suggest we provide an adequate public education, it specifically cites that it, “...shall be a primary obligation of the State of Georgia.” This includes not only elected leaders but all citizens as well. Education of our youth is an economic driver that is the foundation of our society. Educated communities create economically driven and sustainable futures for Georgia.

Our public education system requires involvement, engagement and support from communities large and small. Collaboration begins with the education community. We must believe in what we are doing before we can reach out to others. I encourage each one of you in your local communities to reach out and collaborate with your local, state and federal officials. Collaboration begins with a cultural shift. We must be willing and open to change the way we think and act through regular, respectful, non-partisan dialogue with council members, chambers of commerce, legislators, state offices, and congressional leadership. It is incumbent upon us as education advocates that in order to be effective we must be relevant. There are opportunities to work together to bring viable solutions that meet the needs of all those involved. We must practice a non-partisan policy if we are ever going to achieve the results that our children deserve.

Through non-partisan collaboration we have the opportunity to change the conversation of the perception of public education, but it takes all of us in a collective, collaborative effort to accomplish this goal. On August 28, 2014, Gallup released polling results on Americans’ satisfaction with the education system. While the national rate of satisfaction was 48%, three in four parents are satisfied with their child’s education. “Three in four parents say they are satisfied with the quality of education their oldest child is receiving in 2014, significantly higher than the 48% of Americans who are satisfied with U.S. K-12 education in general.” If 75% of parents are satisfied at a local level, it tells us that there is a national negative perception with education.*

I encourage you to spread the positives that are occurring everyday in our public schools. All too often the light is shone on the negative when there are so many positive, uplifting stories transpiring with our teachers, administrators and students.

The time has come to stand up for public education. Take action, take charge and get involved. I have no doubt you will see the inspiring evidence of students’ achievement in the classroom and beyond. A positive public education system is a viable economic driver that has a rippling effect beyond our imagination.

I encourage each and every one of you to take an active role in the promotion of public education. It starts by simply going to the polls to vote, but your voice has the potential to go beyond the voting booth. Reach out to your local legislators, business leaders and anyone who has an impact on education and build relationships for the common goal we all have... student achievement. Our young people deserve our best.


“We must learn to live together as brothers, or we are going to perish together as fools.” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
By the time this article is published, the 2014 statewide elections will be over or run-offs may still loom ahead. Regardless of who wins each office, we have a choice to make in Georgia. Will warring forces continue to politicize public education or can the leadership at the local and state level evaluate their approach to policy and legislation and begin an open, honest dialogue?

The definition of trust according to Merriam-Webster’s dictionary is “the assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something or one in which confidence is placed.” We must ask ourselves, locally do we have a “trusting,” relationship with our legislators and other community leaders? Georgia will have many new faces in key leadership positions thus creating a renewed opportunity to open lines of communication. The long and historic barriers producing the lack of trust in education must be broken down. We need to remember our children do not attend school as Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, or members of the Tea Party.

Education policy is as complicated and complex as healthcare and takes people from all walks of life to contribute to its success. Research and exploration of successful models are necessary for growth.

We may have differing opinions on the various methods of improving student achievement. But if we all work from good intent we can agree to disagree but find areas where we can compromise. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to shut out the voices that do not agree with us and in doing so exclude some from participation in the decision making process.

Compromise is not a bad word, nor do differing opinions come from difficult people. There is no one who does not want public education to improve in Georgia. We all want what is best for our children- we just may have different ways to get there. Arriving at our shared destination in the most efficient and effective way possible is challenging but achievable.

Accurate data and research must be the basis of our decisions if Georgia ever earns a higher ranking and status nationally and internationally. Data driven decision-making can remove the politics and reduce the potential rhetoric that can stand in the way of progress. Data is a non-partisan illustration of factual information. We must be careful not to skew data to support our argument but to use it to openly and fairly guide the progress for student achievement.

We have made great strides in public education in Georgia but the international landscape for competitive economic growth has also raised the bar in how our young people will fare as they enter the global workforce. All of us at the state and local level must do our part to work together to improve our schools.

“Trust is the glue of life. It’s the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It’s the foundational principle that holds all relationships.” – Stephen Covey
The Role of the Board in Employment

GSBA’s recent Personnel Workshop in September provided a new opportunity to reflect on the role of the Board of Education in the employment process. As all board members and superintendents know, Georgia statute, at least on its face, creates a separation and balance of power between the board and superintendent. “All teachers, principals, other certificated professional personnel, and other personnel [this would appear to include everyone] … shall be employed and assigned by the governing board on the recommendation of its executive officer.” O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211. The superintendent has no authority to hire and the board of education is limited in who can be hired to acting on the specific recommendation of the Superintendent.

In the days of yore, when board members and superintendents were all elected by the voters, employment decisions often became the focus of intense tugs-of-war or even games of chicken with neither side being willing to concede unless their candidate was selected. Fast forward to current day, where the emphasis is on the collaborative responsibilities of the governance team and state law mandates that the board plays the policy role in the collaboration while the superintendent plays the role of policy implementer and manager. With regard to hiring decisions, that would suggest that the board devises a strategic plan and charges the superintendent with bringing recommendations designed to accomplish the goals of that plan. In fact, a review of the State Board of Education Standards for Effective Governance of Local School Systems finds that Domain VI dealing with personnel lists, hiring and evaluating the superintendent, and passing personnel policy as the appropriate role of the board. A look at the more detailed elements of the policy responsibility reveals the following specifics:

1. The board adopts personnel policies that are aligned with the school system’s strategic plan and organizational effectiveness and consistent with applicable statutes.

2. The board and individual board members do not engage in the implementation of personnel policy, including the employment, assignment, or dismissal of personnel, except to accept or reject the recommendations of the superintendent.

3. The board holds the superintendent accountable for assuring that all personnel in the school system are evaluated in accordance with the school system’s mission, strategic plan, school system personnel policies, and applicable statutes.

4. The board follows state laws in matters of school system employee discipline.

Those board members who are familiar with recent incidents where boards or board members have run into conflict with accrediting standards are aware that most of the time, the incident has to do with boards or individual members who fail to heed the warning of the second element and become very engaged in specific personnel decisions. No single issue is more responsible for allegations of “micromanaging.”

Continue on page 19...
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Stand Up 4 Public Schools

In partnership with its state associations, The National School Boards Association launched “Stand Up 4 Public Schools” earlier this year. The national campaign supports local school board governance and honors the achievements of America’s public schools.

The “Stand Up” effort features several celebrity “public schools” advocates: Sal Khan, founder of the not-for-profit Khan Academy; Earvin “Magic” Johnson, basketball legend and business mogul; Montel Williams, former talk show host and celebrity spokesperson; and Barbara Morgan, educator and former astronaut. The ads challenge our assumptions about celebrities “we thought we knew” by telling how public education shaped their lives.

The “Stand Up” campaign is rapidly gaining national attention, with over 45,000 Facebook “Likes.” A new video featuring Montel Williams is available. The campaign website, www.standup4publicschools.org, provides individuals with the tools and resources to take action to support public education.

More Students Taking Advanced Placement But College Readiness Remains Flat

The Center for Public Education reported on the results from the 2014 SAT college entrance exam as well as results from the College Board’s PSAT and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. The report provides information on how prepared high school graduates are for college nationwide and by state. More coverage on the EDifier, the Center for Public Education blog.

Blog website: http://blog.centerforpubliceducation.org/2014/10/07/more-students-taking-advanced-placement-but-college-readiness-remains-flat/

CPE Looks At High School Graduates Who Don’t Go to College

The Center for Public Education releases The Path Least Taken, the first installment of a series looking at the characteristics and outcomes of high school graduates who don’t go to college. (Spoiler: the percentage of non-college-goers is smaller than we thought.) Also a new format to showcase these findings. You can find the full report along with other extras at http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/pathleasttaken.
Occasionally, I have been asked for my reflections on how serving for 12 years on the Cobb County Board of Education has affected my service in the state Senate and vice versa. Truthfully, had I not served on a school board for an extended period of time, I probably would not have had the opportunity to serve as the chairman of Senate Committee on Education and Youth during my sophomore term in the Senate. However, serving in the different roles has enabled me to have the vantage point to see the challenges and opportunities in public education from both perspectives. In doing so, I have come away with rather solidified views and observations on public education.

These are not revolutionary ideas but are the most fundamental principles we must adhere to if we have any intention of being successful in the business of education. It is indeed a business since the funding of public K-12 education comprises 38% of the state budget in FY2015.

1. The teacher is the most direct link between education planning and theory and achieving an effective learning environment for each student. A passion and enthusiasm for teaching children are of far greater importance than years of experience. These traits will ensure a student centered IEP that guarantees each student receives the maximum academic challenge they may desire and be willing to pursue. This is a monumental task and teachers who rise to this challenge deserve all of the support that we can possibly muster,
both financial and otherwise.

2. The principal is probably the most crucial hire that a district can make. Excellent teaching skills do not automatically translate into leadership and managerial proficiencies. They are entirely different skill sets; they are not mutually exclusive, but there is no guarantee that the possession of one skill set makes the possession of another a slam dunk. The building principal is directly responsible for the efficient management of resources both human and financial in each school. Sound hiring practices are the best safe guard against ineffective teaching in the classroom. The principal establishes and maintains a high level of expectation in school climate through leadership by personal example. This begins with a model of fairness and mutual respect for teachers, students and parents and is evidenced by a strong work ethic and high academic expectations.

3. One size does not fit all, neither in the state nor the individual districts, individual schools, nor even each student. We have huge differences in our state on all levels of comparison but if we cannot ultimately apply the state’s resources to the needs of each student we have failed in our responsibility to our kids.

4. As painful as it may seem, there must be some mechanism to at least partially compensate for the differences in wealth per student between districts while at the same time not excusing the responsibilities of each district to provide for the needs of their students. We must also realize that districts that have high wealth per student may also have a higher cost of living than other districts. This disparity has never been recognized nor addressed in our QBE formula.

5. The deterioration of the traditional family structure has done more to complicate the delivery of good education than anything else. The disengaged student, the disinterested parent and the students who are chronically disruptive are in my opinion the greatest challenges we face today. In light of the fact that 42% of all children born in America are in single parent homes and in some demographic segments that percentage is over 70%, it is no wonder that we no longer have the “Ozzie and Harriet” environment that was enjoyed in the 1950’s. According to statistics that I saw recently, 63% of teen suicides, 90% of homeless children and runaways, and 71% of high school dropouts come from fatherless home environments. There is a distinct correlation between lack of family stability and crime.

6. Guaranteeing that above all else, all students are proficient in reading and English comprehension upon the completion of 3rd grade and mastery of the 4 basic math functions by the end of the 5th grade should be the cornerstone of our entire education process. These two areas have more positive impact on future academic success and lowering the dropout rate than any other factors.

7. Counseling and instructing students in the choice of career pathways in the areas of their greatest aptitude and interests will reap a huge return on the investment of education dollars.

8. Changes in education are inevitable. They are dictated by changes in our society on all levels and we don’t have the option to remain as we were. We can view this reality as a blessing or a curse. We must rise to the challenge as an opportunity to improve our ultimate product: an educated society equipped to function in a fast changing world. In my mind, delivering excellent k-12 education is the most important function of our state government. Our success in all other areas of the public domain is contingent on our success in education. It is the most critical element in maintaining a robust economy and our future literally depends on it.

I want to thank each of you for all that you do for our children. If I can help you or if you have thoughts on improving the process, please call my Senate office at 404-657-0406. Let’s join together to make education in Georgia the absolute best it can be.
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Creating Extraordinary Districts

Over the last two decades there has been much discussion about failing schools, a broken public school system, dropout factories, fixing teachers, fixing principals, fixing local boards of education but much less discussion about what it takes to support and motivate students.

Twenty years ago, the Improving America’s Schools Act became law and started a new era. Federal funding was suddenly tied to aligned state standards, testing, and accountability. New terms became part of education jargon – Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), Needs Improvement status, CRCTs to name a few. Lists of schools in the Needs Improvement category began the push for “fixing” schools. There was now concrete evidence some claimed that schools were not getting the job done.

We have had numerous changes in the way we measure progress, determine whether that progress is adequate, and rate schools and school districts since the 1994 model. As consequences for not meeting the mark evolved, states began to create interventions at the school and district level. Some attempts have been made to incentivize students such as the no pass, no play and no pass, no drive laws. Most of the efforts, however, have been aimed at school personnel and the governance structure.

One of the latest ideas is to create a special district in which low performing schools or districts could be placed by a state entity. The structure varies by state as to the level of state control. That may be a reflection in the difference in state constitutions which could limit a state’s actions. Most of these districts are too new to have much of a measurement of success.

The most famous of these is the Recovery School District (RSD) in New Orleans. The RSD is a special district of the Louisiana Department of Education. Schools, not districts, can be put into the RSD. If a school fails to meet the state standards four consecutive years, the school may be run by the RSD, chartered by an organization, or the district may enter into a shared agreement. There are no shared agreements and the RSD closed its last traditional schools in May, so the RSD is now all charters.

According to a Hechinger Report in June 2014, schools run by the Orleans Parish School Board have consistently scored higher than those run by the RSD. The RSD schools this year seemed to do particularly well in 4th grade English, and fifth and eighth grade math. Louisiana’s accountability system has five levels with mastery being the next to the top rank. 12% of the RSD schools scored at the mastery level or above this year; 42% of the Orleans Parish schools did so.

In 2010, Massachusetts created the Office of District and State Turnaround (ODST), a division of the state Department of Education, which can take over schools and districts. Schools ranked in the lowest 20% statewide can fall under the jurisdiction of this office. The statute requires a receiver be appointed for school districts classified as chronically underperforming with all the powers of the superintendent and school committee (their term for a local board). The statute puts limits on the number of schools that can be classified as underperforming or chronically underperforming. Tennessee created the Achievement School District (ASD) in 2010.
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Schools in the bottom 5% of all Title I schools and Title I high schools with a graduation rate less than 60% are removed from the local district and placed under the authority of the Tennessee Department of Education. All the schools are in Memphis or Nashville. Some of the schools, referred to as Achievement Schools, are run directly by the ASD; the others are charters. There is only one year of data available for ASD schools. Assessments showed growth in math and science but a drop in reading scores. Students in the ASD greatly outperformed students statewide in science proficiency according to a report from the Center for American Progress.

In 2011, Michigan created the Education Achievement Authority (EAA), a statewide school district for the lowest performing schools. It began with fifteen Detroit schools with an agreement between the emergency manager of the Detroit Public Schools and Eastern Michigan University. Three of the schools are charters; the rest use an EAA model of placing students at their instructional level – rather than an age-based grade level – to work with teachers and personalized technology. The schools run by the EAA have both an extended school day of 7.5 hours and an extended school year of 210 days. The lowest performing 5% of schools in the state that are not getting satisfactory results from their redesign plan or that are under an emergency manager may also be included in the EAA. Student achievement on the state assessments show mixed results according to a report from the Center for American Progress.

In 2012, Connecticut created the Commissioners Network. The Commissioner of Education can direct interventions in 25 of the state’s schools. Schools may volunteer to join the network or the Commissioner may select them. They remain part of their local district. The Commissioner may base the selection on test scores or other factors such as trends in performance and current interventions. The local or regional board must establish a turnaround committee for the school but if the school’s turnaround committee does not create an acceptable plan, the Commissioner can appoint a special master to implement a turnaround plan.

In 2013, Virginia created the Opportunity Educational Institute and authorized it to take over the supervision and operation of schools that had been denied accreditation and accredited schools that had three consecutive years of warnings. The statute was declared unconstitutional in Norfolk Circuit Court in 2014, and the state decided not to appeal. An increasing number of states seem to be looking at this model. Earlier this year Public Impact released a report on “Extraordinary Authority Districts Design Considerations – Framework and Takeaways” to help guide states considering adopting the model. In this era of moving forward only with research-based ideas, there are few results available so far on which to base a decision. There are also of course legal and political issues to consider in such a move. In developing these plans, the states seem to have thought through more of what it takes to support teaching and learning, but there is no reason it cannot be applied across all schools rather than changing the governance structure of a few. If more school time, freedom from rules, local staffing decisions, etc, are helpful for some, they would probably be helpful for all.

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So what is a board to do in order to fulfill its statutory duty to “employ and assign” all employees within its policy-making function? The standards provide some assistance as step one would appear to be a strategic plan that includes goals and criteria that become the basis for hiring the best teachers and administrators. It is really not an exaggeration to suggest that every hire should be evaluated against the criteria of “how does this advance the goals of the district’s strategic plan?” The superintendent should be able to articulate an answer to that question and, in the rare situation where a majority of the board questions or rejects a recommendation of the superintendent, it should be based on a sincerely held belief that approving the recommendation would not advance the strategic plan, and thus the best interest, of the school district.

Just as important is a recognition by the board of its role in understanding and supporting the implementation of the evaluation process with integrity and professionalism. The recent conference provided an opportunity for board members to hear from State officials about the new evaluation system. Board members have no role in being directly involved in any employee’s evaluation, other than that of the superintendent; but the board has a role in holding the superintendent accountable for seeing that the evaluation process is implemented and then supporting administrators who have done so when addressing employment terminations or non-renewals, consistent with state law.

As all school districts implement the TKES/LKES new evaluation process and the new implementing statute found in O.C.G.A. §20-2-210, it appears that the General Assembly intends for even more reliance to be placed on performance evaluations. “Local school systems shall base decisions regarding retention, promotion, compensation, dismissals, and other staffing decisions, including transfers, placements and preferences in the event of reductions in force, primarily on the results of the evaluations.” § 20-2-210(c)(1). That is one reason it is so important for boards to at least understand how the evaluation process works and what portions of it may be useful in making different decisions. To reemphasize the point made several times, it is not for the board to review the individual evaluations or to compare one employee’s evaluation with another employee’s in acting on recommendations from the administration, but the board can certainly expect that the administration, in making its recommendation, will have done this review and can support its decision consistent with those evaluations.

Finally, the roles become even more confused as boards begin to consider different governing models, especially those involving charter schools and charter systems, where part of the process involves empowering local governance teams at the school level with certain authority. While superintendents and boards are used to relying on local school leadership in the form of the school principal or, in the case of hiring a principal, school councils, to participate in the process leading to the superintendent’s recommendation, the role of a school-based board as it ultimately ends up being defined in State Board Rules and individual charters adds a layer of complexity that the State and local boards are just beginning to address.

More than 80% of public education dollars are spent on human resources and much of a district’s legal budget is directly tied to employment issues. Nowhere is the relationship between board and superintendent more important. Building the relationship on a solid foundation based on Georgia statutes and good governing practices is the key to success.
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How to Register

To register, go to www.gsba.com and click on the "Online Registration" link. The deadline for regular conference registration is November 14, 2014.*

Conference Registration - $350
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- Making the 2015 Decision – $230
- Student Achievement Workshop – $230
- School Law Workshop – $230
- School Law Workshop for Attorneys – $335

Please Note: You can register for the pre-conference workshops and the conference separately on the online form. Please choose which events you would like to attend.

Hotel Information

When making reservations, mention that you are attending the 2014 GSBA/GSSA Annual Conference. If systems have reserved rooms, but know they will not use them, releasing them now will allow others to use the rooms under the conference rate and release GSBA from financial responsibility for those rooms.

You can find a list of hotels and phone numbers at www.gsba.com/conference.

* Registration fees increase after November 14, 2014. There are no refunds for cancellations received after November 14. Cancellations must be in writing and postmarked no later than November 14, 2014. A $35 handling fee will be charged for all cancellations. Late Fee Policy: There is a $35 additional fee per registrant not per workshop or event for on-site registrations and those received after November 14.

Keynote Speakers

Dave Weber, President, Weber Associates
Friday Keynote Speaker

For over 25 years Dave Weber’s fun, high energy, and entertaining style have made him one of the country’s most sought after speakers. Presenting well over 160 times each year to tens of thousands all across the country, he is often described as a “Chihuahua on caffeine” and is always a crowd favorite.

Shan Cooper, General Manager, Lockheed Martin/Marietta
Saturday Keynote Speaker

Shan Cooper is Vice President of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company and General Manager of the company’s Marietta, GA, facility. She is also responsible for the company’s subassembly sites in Meridian, MS, and Clarksburg, WV. In addition, she serves as the company’s Vice President of Business Ethics. She was named to her current position in January 2011.

Special Note: On November 4, Georgia will select from candidates running to fill the office of Governor and State Superintendent of Schools. The outcomes of these two campaigns hold significant potential for major impact upon the future of education in our state. Candidates in the two races have been invited to address Conference attendees pending the election results.
Pre-Conference Workshops

New Board Member Orientation ($295*)
Wednesday, December 3 and Thursday, December 4

The finest introduction to local school board service found anywhere. All new school board members are required by law (O.C.G.A 20-2-230) to attend New Board Member Orientation within the first year of assuming office. In the day and a half training, school board members will be introduced to school law, school finance issues including budget, parliamentary procedures, superintendent evaluation process and much more. Lunch is included in this registration fee for Thursday.

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School Law Workshop
Board Members ($230*) | Attorneys ($335*)
Thursday, December 4

One of the most important and prestigious workshops offered annually by GSBA. For over 60 years, GSBA has been the leader in helping local school boards interpret the complexities of laws, rules, regulations and court cases regarding public education. The E. Freeman Leverett School Law Workshop is the most heavily attended annual workshop offered by GSBA. Lunch is included in this registration fee.

Board Members will receive 6 credit hours.

CLE credits for attorneys are also available.

Making the 2015 Decision Workshop ($230*)
Thursday, December 4

This workshop will provide board members and superintendents with the latest information regarding the flexibility options that the state requires school systems to choose by June 30, 2015. These options include: IE2, Charter System and Status Quo. Also included in this workshop will be presentations by districts that are exhibiting best practices by using one of these models. Lunch is included in the registration fee.

Board Members will receive 6 credit hours.

Student Achievement Workshop ($230*)
Thursday, December 4

Improving student academic achievement involves planning, goal setting, collecting and using data as well as collaboration between and among the board of education, superintendent, local school administrators and teachers. Learn how to manage resources to improve your district’s academic achievement. Lunch is included in the registration fee.

Board Members will receive 6 credit hours.

* Lunch on Thursday is included in the registration fee.

Schedule At A Glance**

Wednesday, December 3, 2014
11:00 a.m. Registration for New Board Member Orientation (NBMO)
1:00 p.m. NBMO Begins
5:30 p.m. NBMO Concludes First Day

Thursday, December 4, 2014
7:00 a.m. Registration
8:30 a.m. NBMO Resumes
8:30 a.m. School Law Workshop Begins
8:30 a.m. Student Achievement Workshop Begins
8:30 a.m. Making 2015 Decision Workshop Begins
9:30 a.m. Exhibit Area Opens
12:00 p.m. Lunch for All Workshops
1:00 p.m. Workshops Resume
4:30 p.m. Workshops Conclude
5:30 p.m. Exhibit Area Closes

Friday, December 5, 2014
7:00 a.m. Conference Registration & Coffee
7:00 a.m. Voluntary Devotional Time
7:00 a.m. Exhibit Area Opens
8:00 a.m. First General Session
- Dave Weber, Keynote Speaker
9:30 a.m. Break and Tour of Exhibits
10:15 a.m. Second General Session
- 2013–2014 Distinguished Board
11:15 a.m. Mini Sessions
12:30 p.m. Awards Luncheon
1:45 p.m. Break and Tour Exhibits
2:30 p.m. Third General Session
2:30 p.m. Exhibits Close
3:30 p.m. Mini Sessions (Repeated)

Saturday, December 6, 2014
7:00 a.m. Coffee
8:00 a.m. Breakfast General Session
- Shan Cooper, Keynote Speaker
- GSBA/GSSA Service Awards Recognition
- Door Prizes | You must be present to win!

Mini Sessions (offered at 11:15 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.)
- The X Factor
- Strategic Planning
- REACH Georgia
- Teacher and Leader Evaluation
- The Basics of Risk
- Management Pooling
- The GSBA Recognition Program
- Others to be announced

* *Schedule is subject to change.
Join Us for the NSBA Advocacy Institute in Washington D.C.

The Federal Relations Network has been revamped and is now known as the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Advocacy Institute. The Conference will take place February 1-3, 2015 at the new Marriott Marquis in Washington, DC. School board members are invited and encouraged to participate in two days of intense training after which they will accompany GSBA staff to Capitol Hill to share the NSBA advocacy agenda with members of Congress on Tuesday, February 3rd.

We hope you will consider taking advantage of this year’s Conference. The information shared will enhance our advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill as well as when we return to Georgia. Registration for the Institute will open on November 4. GSBA will be able to respond to your questions about hotel and conference registration and will coordinate arrangements for Capitol Hill appointments to ensure that our message is consistent and comprehensive. This is an open invitation for school board members to join us in Washington, DC.

As soon as we receive registration material from NSBA we will forward it to you. Contact Zenda Bowie, Director of Field Services for additional information: zbowie@gsba.com; 770-962-6851.

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Author and speaker Dave Weber will provide a high energy keynote address during the GSBA/GSSA Annual Winter Conference, First General Session December 5.

Some people define leadership by a title. Others define a leader by the amount of responsibility or authority one has, or by how many people a person oversees. Sometimes, a leader has a combination of all of those.

I want to reframe the idea of what it means to be a leader, to help people understand that the idea of leadership isn’t just some lofty goal or state of being reserved for presidents, CEOs, and the rich.

No matter who you are, or what you do, or how much wealth or material possessions you have (or don’t), you have the ability to become a leader in your own life – and profoundly change it, and the lives of those around you, for the better.

While standards like title, responsibility, authority, financial standing or occupation can be universal measures to establish leaders, being a leader can have a much more subtle, but no less powerful, definition.

A leader is someone who has influence. The key word in that sentence is influence – not power, not wealth, not status, not looks. Influence can equal leadership, for good or for bad. Of course, good leadership is what we’re striving for, and it boils down to positively influencing the situation. Anyone – even if they don’t have a title, occupation or demeanor that would necessarily imply it.

Now, with a definition like that, who can be a leader? Take a look at any group of kindergartners on the playground. Not one of those little stinkers has a title, but there is definitely someone in charge, influencing what is going on. While CEOs are certainly considered leaders, receptionists can be, too. Principals are definite leaders, but custodians can just as easily demonstrate leadership qualities in their jobs.

While the “traditional” view of leadership usually assigns most of it at the top of an organization or department (in theory, that is!), the best performing entities – whether they’re companies, clubs or sports teams – have members who demonstrate leadership at every level. These “leaders without the title” have latched on to the profound reality that because they have influence, they lead.

You have influence. Therefore, YOU ARE A LEADER. Use your influence to positively impact what is going on around you. Lead well.

For more information about Dave Weber or to bring him in to speak to your group, visit DaveWeber.com or contact Rosa Higgins at 770-422-5654 ext. 117 or email her at rosa@weberassociates.com.
This election season Georgia’s public schools are once again a focal point in the conversation about Georgia’s future. No single issue is as important to the future of this state as a strong public school system, from pre-school through college. And there is still work to be done if we are to transform our schools into the kind of learning centers that will prepare our students for college, career and life. Many who read this are aware of the Georgia Vision Project and its research-based recommendations that are transforming schools all over our state. For those who are new to their positions or to Georgia, I provide this primer.

**What is the Georgia Vision Project?**

It is a collaborative initiative begun by the Georgia School Boards Association and the Georgia School Superintendents Association. The purpose of the Project is to transform Georgia’s schools through the implementation of research-based recommendations in seven core areas of school governance and operation. These recommendations were developed with the support of Georgia’s college and university faculty, national thought leaders in each core area, and the input achieved through nine community conversations with citizens across Georgia.

In the last 15 months GSBA and GSSA have been joined by 35 partners who share our sense of urgency. These partners include educator associations, state agencies, chambers of commerce, business and industry, child and family advocacy groups and foundations. A complete list of partners can be found on our website, www.visionforpubliced.org.

**What are the goals of the Georgia Vision Project?**

- To maximize student achievement in every Georgia public school.
- To build and maintain support for public education in every local community.
- In short - to do what we know must be done.

**What specific progress has the Georgia Vision Project made?**

1. School systems have incorporated the Vision recommendations (revised in 2013) in their local district Strategic Improvement Plans. GSBA has included the Vision Project recommendations in their School Board Recognition Program. These two efforts have allowed school systems to embed this work into their actionable improvement plans.

2. We have developed a campaign to message the successes of our schools. Branded as “Spark – Igniting Public Education in Georgia,” our campaign focuses on three key ingredients for school success: **Teachers, Leaders, Innovation.** We know we have to do some things differently to prepare our graduates for college, career and life. We also know it will take a well-prepared educator workforce and inspiring leadership. Expect to see more on the Spark! campaign this fall and winter.

**Is the work making a difference?**

Yes! We are seeing impressive results in achievement gains and trust level all over Georgia. An industry-standard evaluation to be completed in summer, 2015 should provide greater detail as to how much we are improving in these two areas.

It’s too soon to calculate the impact of the Spark! messaging campaign. Our partners and every district leader can help by promoting the Spark message themes with their members, staff and clients. A toolkit is under development that local district staff can use to turn these themes into a local message that will resonate with their community.

**How can I help?**

1. **Highlight** the work of your school or system, especially the innovative practices and programs in your district. Promote the inspiring work your teachers are doing to engage students and help them find their passion.

2. **Engage** your community in the work of the school system. Communities win when schools, business and industry, civic and service groups, churches and families all work together to ensure a bright future for their children. Our schools can do a lot for our students but they can’t do it alone.

3. **Stand up for teachers.** Teacher morale is at an all-time low. Our teachers are making a difference in the lives of their students, even in the face of great challenges. They deserve our support and respect.

4. **VOTE.** Deciding not to vote is not rebellion, it is surrender.

I wish you nothing but success in your important work with Georgia’s children and the educators who inspire them.

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To learn more about the Georgia Vision Project visit our website at www.visionforpubliced.org
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Contact Pam Harrison for more information on: the GSBA Associate Program opportunities, the Sponsorship Program, the Advertising Program, and the Exhibit Program. You can reach Pam at pharrison@gsba.com or 770-962-6855 to discuss ideas you have that will create a win-win experience.
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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.