A Life Without Boundaries: Malcolm Mitchell Shares the Magic of Reading!
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Wise Leadership
By Katrina Young, Rockdale County BOE and GSBA President

As Board of Education leaders, wisdom comes into play by understanding the difference between impact and impression. Leadership is not about making an impression, which is a moment in time, whereas making an impact has transformative and lasting results. Wisdom is defined as the quality of having experience, knowledge and good judgment.

Wise leaders are characterized by confidence, assurance and endurance. Calmness is a strength of character that wise leaders bring to all situations. Wise leaders should realize people, including children, are significant and have a responsibility to promote significance and self-worth.

Wisdom is more about practical knowledge than intelligence and in this dynamic educational arena, it is imperative to exercise wisdom in our leadership roles because our children are depending on us. I’d like to share my “Katrinaisms of wise leadership,” some are borrowed and you may be familiar with, however, this food for thought continues to guide and inspire me. Enjoy.

Wise Leaders:
Listen
Breakdown barriers
Applaud successes
Extend positive affirmations
Inspire others to action
Provide prevailing and proper vision
Empower and invest in others
Know their behavior matters and how it impacts others
Pay attention to facial expressions and nonverbal communication
Bring strength, vitality, and joy to others
Are open to criticism and correction
Realize their mission and accept their assignment
Maintain an open mind
Leave people better off than how they found them
Welcome failure as a learning opportunity
Have the courage to take an unpopular stance
Invite feedback and realize there is always room for improvement
Work toward excellence and not perfection

Leadership is our vocation. Paid or voluntary, know we are here to serve and transform.
CONNECT. ENGAGE. COLLABORATE. LEARN.

The GSBA Hub is an online community of learning and collaboration for GSBA members, facilitating more efficient and effective board governance – a give and take of helpful information, anecdotes, advice, and wisdom. Log in to the community, get involved, and let your voice be heard!

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MEMBER BENEFITS

GSBA members have exclusive access to a variety of helpful, online communication and collaboration tools including:

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- Board management resources
- News, events, articles, and blogs
- Capitol Watch
- Member profiles and friend connections
- Internal messaging
- Dedicated app for iOS and Android with push notifications
Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing!

By Valarie Wilson, GSBA Executive Director

Across this country and state, communities like yours and mine are doing their best to provide warm and nurturing environments that enable people to realize their very best opportunities. Perhaps no other entity outside of school boards within communities feels this responsibility more. As school boards, we are charged with the responsibility of caring for our children, our most vulnerable population of citizens; ensuring an opportunity for them to achieve their highest potential. We recognize that while the work of our school systems defines the educational levels of our citizens, more importantly the work also defines the economic success of our communities. I have always believed that school board members and the work they do could make or break a community.

When I served on my local board of education, it was necessary for us to work along with our city commissioners, our county commissioners, our business leaders, our faith leaders, our institutions of higher learning, our civic leaders, our parents and our community members on behalf of our students. Those relationships were critical to our success; and, for the board I served on, that was a non-negotiable. Many times I was painfully made aware of the fact that those other entities could do their jobs without us, which made for strained relationships. But those were the times that I learned the importance of KEEPING THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING. It would have been easy to allow ourselves as a board and as individual board members, to become distracted by issues that did not matter to the success of our students or our community. The group of men and women I served with quickly learned that our success as a school system meant our city’s success; and, it was our job as public servants to assist our stakeholders in recognizing this.

How did we do that? We focused on the MAIN THING (our students) through the manner in which we conducted the business of the school system. We were transparent in our decision-making; we engaged and involved the community in strategic planning and aligned our work to the plan; we shared performance data and outcomes; we shared our successes AND failures; we developed strategies to address areas of weakness, utilizing best practices to address them;

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we were careful stewards of our funds; we worked collaboratively on behalf of all of our students; and, we never forgot that our work was bigger than us. We never forgot THE MAIN THING.

At GSBA, it is our pleasure to support our members as you go about the business of KEEPING THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING. The staff of GSBA has one focus, supporting the collective resolve of the 180 public school boards in Georgia as they work to ensure excellent outcomes for their students and communities. Whether we are assisting you in finding the best superintendent for your system, or helping you create a strategic plan that uniquely meets the needs of your students and educators, or building your professional capacity for this role, or advocating for good policy that supports strong student outcomes, GSBA will always work to provide the very best service to you, our members.
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Taking Advantage of Post-Election Training

*By Phil Hartley, GSBA General Counsel, Harben, Hartley & Hawkins, LLC*

As the state and nation prepare for an election in November, much attention is focused on races for Governor and Congress. Public education is certainly an issue of prime importance and hopefully voters will carefully review the positions of all candidates as they cast their vote in these top-of-the-ballot races. However, no races are more important to the citizens of our state than the local ones that will determine the makeup of boards of education for the next two years. In almost all of the 159 county school districts in the state, two or more board members are being elected or reelected. While some communities will not see a change in board governance as a result of this election, many will, whether one new member joins the board or a majority of the board is changed. The focus of this article is not on that process, which will be completed or practically completed by the time this is read. Instead, this article is to address the importance for school districts to use this time of transition to build a solid foundation for a new governance team and/or to review existing board norms or protocols to see if they continue to provide the structure needed for effective communication among members and with the public.

Whether it is one or more new board members or a new superintendent, a change in the makeup of the governance team for a school district requires planning, training, and collaboration. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-230(b) requires the State Board of Education to adopt a training program for local board members and, pursuant to the current training requirements adopted by the State Board, new board members are required to receive fifteen hours of training during their first year, with six of those hours dedicated to school finance. GSBA, at the request of many new board members, has expanded its new board member training to provide even more hours in an effort to give new board members the basic knowledge necessary to begin to function effectively. An essential part of the training requirement is whole board training, designed for the entire governance team, of at least three hours, to be included within the cumulative annual total required for both new and veteran board members (required presently to have nine hours). The initial whole board training when new board members are seated is an excellent opportunity to take the general information provided through the training of GSBA and apply it to the particulars of the local board and the local district.

Many school boards and superintendents develop guidelines as to how they will communicate and function with each other. While a few boards actually develop policies that address some or all of these issues, policies are often viewed as rules that govern the community, staff and students. Here the goal is not to create rights or procedures for others, but instead to reach agreement as to how the members of the governance team work with each other. In some situations, this working relationship effectively functions with an unwritten understanding. Often, having these norms, procedures, guidelines or whatever they might be called in
Board members are often surprised to find that, despite the attention that the subject has received, there is little binding law on how a governance team should work together. State law, primarily O.C.G.A. §20-2-61, mandates that boards of education and individual members should not “micromanage” the superintendent, but the term is not defined further. Board members are cautioned that they have no authority as individuals but they must “work together” with the entire board and only take “official action” when acting “as a whole.” And at the broadest level, boards are told that their fundamental role is to “establish policy ... with the focus on student achievement” and that the role of the superintendent is to “implement” that policy. The State Board of Education has developed Standards for Effective Governance, but they are not binding and leave much to the determination of the individuals on the governance team.

There must be an agenda for any meeting of the board, but how that meeting is put together and what, if any, input an individual board member has in the development of any agenda is left to each board. As the elected representatives of the community, board members play an essential role as liaisons between the district and community members; but how do individual board members act as such a liaison without appearing to represent the district, and how do they communicate concerns of the community to other board members and the administration without micromanaging? How do members get the information needed to effectively participate in meetings of the board? What information does the board expect to be provided routinely? How does an individual board member get additional information, which he or she may perceive as needed and when is such a request being made as a board member or just as any other citizen? Are those treated differently? What communication does the board as a whole expect from the superintendent, about what, when and how? These are just some of many questions that have to be answered for a group of people to effectively govern a large and important operation like a school district, but the answers to the questions often vary from one school district to another, or even from one board to the next within the same district.

If a district has developed a set of norms, then providing training on how those norms have worked is an essential part of the orientation for a new board member. It may be that the new member has suggestions as to changes or improvements in those norms that would improve current practices; at least that discussion should take place. If a district has not developed such a set of norms, there is no better time than the election of a new member(s) to begin the process of establishing what norms exist (even if they have never been written down) and developing norms in areas where new ones may be needed. Through such a process, the election of a new board member serves as an opportunity for all board members and the superintendent to rededicate to an effective working relationship among the members of the governance team for the benefit of all citizens, staff, and, most of all, the students whom they were elected or appointed to serve.
Growing up in my elementary school years, I had one of the most difficult daily summertime rituals in my young mind. My parents forced me against my will to go to bed while the sun was still setting, and I had to lie there and listen to the excited screams of other kids throughout the neighborhood still awake and playing outside. I have to admit it was torturous knowing there were fireflies to catch, games of kick-the-can, hide and seek, cops and robbers, and the endless fun on what I felt I was missing out.

Today, I am troubled as I travel through neighborhoods in metro areas and rural areas, wealthy areas and low-income areas, the community interaction I witnessed as a kid seems to be dwindling. Fewer and fewer families and friends seem to be interacting with their neighbors in the long summer evenings.

The list of distractions that we encounter vary: smartphones, Netflix, smart TVs, video game consoles, endless news cycles, social media, long sports practices and work responsibilities have seemed to diminish the availability of time to develop strong community ties. All of these distractions have forced us into a more individualistic and closed society.

While these distractions are very consuming, there is a beacon of hope for every community. Our public schools continue to create opportunities for community interaction in countless ways. No matter what level of school – elementary, middle or high – there are ways to meet your neighbors and converse on common subjects that range from academics to athletics, from politics to healthcare and everything in between. Having kids in school is not a prerequisite nor a requirement.

Our public schools are a reflection of our communities. It is incumbent upon us to create tight knit communities and strong support systems for each other. We must rejoin our neighbors through the public education community events that already exist and need our involvement. We all have something to give back, especially to our “millennial” and younger generations. If only in bridging the gaps in conversation and discussion, it is a step in the right direction.

Therefore, as school leaders, invite and encourage your neighbors to attend a school sporting event, read to a pre-k class, mentor, tutor or even volunteer at the fall fair.

A community that interacts is a safer, healthier place that will thrive in times of need and in times of prosperity.
Featured Article

"Whenever I listened to people I considered to be successful, there was a common theme: they all talked about reading books. I started to equate any amount of success with the ability to read effectively."
A Life Without Boundaries: Malcolm Mitchell Shares the Magic of Reading

By Scotty Brewington, Contributing Writer, MarketJet, LLC

“Whenever I listened to people I considered to be successful, there was a common theme: they all talked about reading books. I started to equate any amount of success with the ability to read effectively.”


He then invites everyone to reach deep into his magic hat, where they also find books that inspire them to follow their own dreams.

It’s a tale that, in many ways, mirrors Mitchell’s own story.

Today, Malcolm Mitchell is known for a number of accomplishments. Not only is the Valdosta, Georgia-native a Super Bowl champion and legendary University of Georgia football star, Mitchell is also a Georgia Children’s Author of the Year and a dedicated crusader for children’s literacy.

It all started with a magical trip to an Athens bookstore.

A life without boundaries
As a freshman at the University of Georgia, Malcolm was one of the top wide receivers in the country, but he struggled in the classroom – especially with his reading, which was around an eighth grade level at the time.

“Second semester of my freshman year at UGA, I was in English class and a teacher asked another student to read out loud,” said Mitchell. “She sounded so clear when she read that it was almost poetic. I wasn’t a strong reader and that was the first time I had the urge to do something about it.”

Later that year, Mitchell and a friend were shopping in a local Barnes and Noble bookstore, and Mitchell asked another random shopper and mother of five, Kathy Rackley, if she could recommend a good book for him to read. The discussion led to Rackley’s own neighborhood book club made up of a dozen or so middle-aged women.

Mitchell asked if he could join. Rackley ran the idea by the other members. They agreed and Mitchell joined the club, where he attended meetings regularly over the next two years.

“That’s when I started to really dive in and look at reading as a whole,” Mitchell said. “Whenever I listened to people I considered to be successful, there was a common theme: they all talked about reading books. I started to equate any amount of success with the ability to read effectively.”

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**The importance of book ownership**

The more Mitchell read, the more he felt the effects of reading. He graduated from UGA in December 2015 with a degree in communications and was drafted by the New England Patriots in May 2016. That year, he also wrote “The Magician’s Hat.”

While at UGA, Mitchell founded his own youth literacy initiative, Read with Malcolm, which is committed to introducing book ownership to all students and improving literacy for kids with below-grade-level reading skills in households where reading is not a priority.

Research shows that the motivation to read decreases with age. Combine that statistic with the fact that some 61% of low-income families have no age-appropriate books in their homes and the outcome is bleak. Children who can’t read by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than students who are proficient readers.

On the other hand, multiple studies show that children in homes with at least 20 age-appropriate books get three years more schooling than those in homes without books and that book ownership fosters literacy and an overall interest in reading.

“In Georgia alone, 65% of third grade students are not proficient readers,” said Beth Pann, executive director of the Share the Magic Foundation, Mitchell’s nonprofit organization. “That is important because beginning in fourth grade, kids transition from learning to read to reading to learn about other things. Having a home library helps inspire them to read and develop skills that are on grade level.”

As part of the Read with Malcolm program, Mitchell holds Reading Rallies where he visits schools and community organizations to share his love of reading. At these rallies, Mitchell shares his story with students and leads a group read-along session. A magician also performs.

“It’s really more like a pep rally than an author’s visit,” said Anne Sapp, director of the Read with Malcolm programs. “The kids all dance and move around and have fun. Malcolm shares his personal story and why reading is so important to him and then they all pull out their books and read together. The idea is for the students to connect with Malcolm and also make the connection that reading is exciting and fun.”

Mitchell himself remembers what it’s like to grow up in a home without books and not having money to purchase books from the school book fair. At each Reading Rally, every student receives a copy of Mitchell’s book, regardless of their financial circumstances, so that they have at least one book to take home.
“Most kids don’t have age-appropriate books to read. I was one of those kids growing up,” said Mitchell.

“It wasn’t because my mom didn’t care, it’s just the way it was. If we are talking to kids about the importance of reading, we have to provide them with the tools. They have to have a book to read.”

Sharing the magic
Mitchell’s Share the Magic Foundation was created in 2016 to promote the long-term benefits of reading and book ownership for low-income students in under-served communities across the country. The foundation partners with schools and organizations to find corporate sponsors and grants to cover the cost of the books for the rallies.

To date, more than 46,700 students in over 190 elementary schools, children’s hospitals and community-service organizations have received a copy of Mitchell’s book. Copies of “The Magician’s Hat” have been donated to charitable organizations and libraries across the country, and Mitchell himself has conducted Reading Rallies at over 50 elementary schools.

In addition to the Reading Rallies, an Early Learning Reading Initiative provides schools with “The Magician’s Hat” for each student, an animated video of Malcolm reading the book, and a teacher’s guide with extension activities such as vocabulary lessons, writing tasks and assessments.

The foundation also offers virtual learning programs including READCamp, a free virtual training camp and summer reading campaign to encourage K-12 students to read over summer break. Students participate in drills and practice with “Head Coach” Mitchell to maintain their literacy skills by reading six books in eight weeks. Students who read 10 books are named “MVPs.” Students across the country participated in READCamp this year, reading nearly 200,000 minutes over their summer break.

READBowl is another program to get students excited about reading that kicks off the same day as the College Football National Championship Game and runs for four weeks, wrapping up on Super Bowl Sunday. In 2018, over 5,200 K-12 students in 187 classrooms across the country joined the challenge and read a combined 1.4 million minutes during the 2018 READBowl.

The 2018 READBowl national reading champions included a fourth grade class in Valdosta, Georgia; a sixth grade class in Nantucket, Massachusetts; and a high school English class in Lumpkin, Georgia.

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“The idea of READBowl is to inspire students to gain a positive attitude about reading while at the same time providing teachers with resources for their classrooms,” said Pann. “Teachers can be creative with the program, creating competitions with other classes and rival schools in the community. It’s a great leverage point to start off the year.”

Reading Ambassadors, another Read with Malcolm service-learning program, encourages middle and high school students to go out into their communities and read to young readers.

As Reading Ambassadors, students take a copy of “The Magician’s Hat” to local elementary schools and youth centers and read-aloud to younger students to mentor and inspire them as well as to strengthen their own reading skills.

“This past spring, a high school in Lithonia picked 100 athletes to participate in the program. They each received a book, and Malcolm spoke to them and shared how he developed a love for learning when he started going out into the community and reading to elementary school kids,” said Sapp. “A week or so later, the high school students went to a local elementary school and read to their reading buddies. They were all in the hallways and cafeteria, paired up and reading the book together, and then the high school students gave their books to the younger students to keep.”

“One school in New England that participated in the Reading Ambassador program has even purchased additional books throughout the year to share with their reading buddies,” Sapp said.

Other Read with Malcolm programs include Teacher Tuesdays and Friday Nights Read, designed to use popular social media platforms to promote what teachers are doing to encourage excitement and “change the game” of reading in the classroom. Every Tuesday throughout the school year, a teacher is featured on the foundation’s Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. On Fridays, students are encouraged to share what – and where – they are reading on Friday nights.

For the 2018-19 school year, the Share the Magic Foundation has partnered with the Andrew and Walter Young Family YMCA to start an after-school literacy program for youth at high risk of academic failure. The READTeam initiative will serve as a pilot for other low-income communities to improve literacy rates and promote the benefits of reading. Another program, Read with Malcolm’s “Carry the Torch for Literacy,” followed the theme of the 2018 Winter Olympics to creatively inspire kids to read after school. Some 2,500 kids participated nationally, reading 500,000 minutes at home over two weeks.

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Follow your dreams wherever you want to go.
Since 2016, Read with Malcolm’s literacy programs have directly impacted over 54,000 students through in-school programs and national reading challenges. In 2017, over 11,500 students directly participated in one of Read with Malcolm’s literacy programs.

In 2018, as of August 31, over 22,500 students had participated in a Read with Malcolm program including 65 schools in 32 cities in seven states. Another 100 elementary school students in Georgia received “The Magician’s Hat” as part of the Reading Ambassador program.
For Mitchell, reading has done more than just improve his literacy skills. It’s personal.

“The more I read, the more I feel the effects of reading and witness them in my own life,” Mitchell said. “It has changed the way I think about problems, how I interact with other people, and it has encouraged me to try new things I wouldn’t normally do – like write a book. It’s essential that kids understand the magic of reading because it really opens the door to a lot of opportunities.”

Mitchell realizes that the opportunities reading offers extend far beyond sports.

“Someone asked me once if I would ever steer a kid away from football. I said never – I wouldn’t steer them away from anything they want to do. I’m just saying that you can be better at anything you want to do if you read. You can give yourself a better chance of accomplishing your goals.”

For Mitchell, the next step is to write another book and put books – all kinds of books – into the hands of millions of kids.

Mitchell understands the magic of books. His favorite book, “The Glass Castle” by Jeannette Walls, describes a childhood full of imagination and unconditional love – a story of children who find the strength to overcome all odds and improve their situation.

“So many people discredit the art of reading,” said Mitchell. “As you are reading along, you are building this whole universe that you can’t really see. It’s not a movie they are showing you. It’s just words. You are building this universe in your head as you map out the story. That’s the magic piece I want to help kids understand.”

The READBowl 2019 National Championship of Reading – the biggest reading contest of the year – kicks off January 7, 2019. The national reading champions will be crowned on Super Bowl Sunday.

Share the Magic Foundation hopes to involve 25,000 kids this year in over 800 classrooms across the U.S. including every K-8 classroom in Georgia.

Winners will win a variety of prizes including copies of Mitchell’s book, gift certificates for teachers to purchase more books for their classrooms, and a special message from Mitchell for the winning classrooms.

Registration for READBowl 2019 opens on November 1st and is free. You can also join Malcolm for “A Magical Evening of Literacy” on February 28, 2019 at The Foundry at Puritan Mill in Atlanta to learn more about his mission to inspire kids to read.

For more information about registration and tickets to these events and more, visit www.readwithmalcolm.com.
Georgia School Boards Association is pleased to announce the creation of the Governance Team of the Year Award. This prestigious award honors the top board and superintendent team who have achieved all-around success in their school system.

This honor is deeply rooted in the seven components of the Georgia Vision Project’s research-based recommendations for Georgia’s public schools; however, a system does not have to have formally adopted the Vision for Public Education to apply.

In June of 2017 at the GSBA Summer Conference, it was announced that we would develop this high-level award to showcase best practices in Georgia’s K-12 public education. We are excited about what this award will demonstrate for the governance teams that are recognized as well as the statewide recognition it will bring to the hard work of public schools.

The application process closed Friday, June 15, 2018. The award will be presented at a special banquet the night of Thursday, December 6, 2018, at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel in Atlanta during the 2018 GSBA/GSSA Annual Conference. During this time, the district finalists are invited to attend to celebrate their successes and to hear the announcement of the winning district.

2018 GSBA Governance Team of the Year Finalists

Bleckley County Schools
Chickamauga City Schools
Dawson County Schools
Effingham County Schools
Forsyth County Schools

Gwinnett County Schools
Jefferson City Schools
Lumpkin County Schools
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Schley County Schools
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All for the kids.

To most, that sign by the road says Parrish is a school builder.

However, what many don’t see, is the passion our team gives back to each of our communities through volunteering, mentoring, educating. Parrish is more than a builder of schools. We build futures.
ASSOCIATION NEWS

Welcome to our latest news going on at the Georgia School Boards Association. We hope to keep you updated on our most recent news and provide you with useful information.

Debbie Tweedell has been the GSBA bookkeeper for 22 years! She retired at the end of September. Although we miss her, we want to wish her the very best in retirement! Thank you Debbie and welcome to our two new members to the accounting department, Alicia Hernandez and Kari Lewallen.

GSBA has revamped its Mentorship program! New board members will be assigned a mentor who will provide counsel, be a valuable resource and keep you on the right path to good boardmanship. The mentor gives advice about school board roles and responsibilities based upon best practices. We are excited that former GSBA Executive Director, Jeannie (Sis) Henry, and former GSBA RMS Director, Trudy Sowar, will be leading this program!

GSBA would like to introduce Julie Rhame as the new GSBA Director of Member Engagement! In this newly created role, Julie will implement and execute initiatives that will help members achieve board development goals, utilize services of the association, build stronger relationships with members and provide programming catered to members’ responses from workshops and events.

Rhame served as a school board member for the City Schools of Decatur for 12 years. She also served as the board’s vice chair and facilitated several training sessions at various conferences during her board tenure on topics that included strategic planning, community engagement, board norms and combating the achievement gap. She has worked in the communications field for more than 30 years, with emphasis in the K-12 and higher education sectors that included tenures as Director of Communications for Georgia Tech and Executive Director of Communications for the DeKalb County School System.

GSBA Director of Member Engagement Julie Rhame

Debbie (center) pictured with her husband Bob Tweedell and GSBA President Katrina Young.

Sis Henry, GSBA Mentor

Trudy Sowar, GSBA Mentor
Funding Public Education

By Angela Palm, GSBA Director of Legislative and Policy Services

The funding of public education is a complicated and often controversial subject. It is, however, something that school board members need to understand the basics. Your schools are funded through local, state, and federal dollars. Excluding capital outlay, local dollars are mainly derived from property taxes. State funding is largely through the QBE formula, although some districts also receive an equalization grant, which is discussed below. Federal funds are based on the district’s students qualifying for various programs such as Title I for poverty and IDEA for services to students with disabilities. This article will not go into federal calculations.

The amount from each entity varies considerably. Consider the comparisons below (percentages are rounded):

When policymakers, media or the community look only at the state average to discuss funding, they are missing a lot of the story. This is one of the reasons school board members need to understand the makeup of their funding – so you can tell the story of the resources for your students. The revenue report for each district and state school is on the Department of Education’s website.
Local Revenue
Property taxes often come under fire, but little attention is paid – other than by you -- to the current exemptions and the financial impact they have. There is an increasing number of senior citizens calling for more exemptions for them. More exemptions mean less revenue, so costs must be cut and/or the millage raised. Senior citizens are a valuable part of the community and nobody wants to price them out of their homes, but granting exemptions must be balanced with other parts of the tax system. Look at the exemption totals on your consolidated tax digest on the Department of Revenue’s website to understand what is happening in your school district. What changes would have to be made to grant a new exemption? How many mills would taxes have to increase to cover the loss if no changes were made?

Most school districts are limited to levying 20 mills without voter approval to increase it. Ten school systems that had a penny sales tax for maintenance and operations were grandfathered in to continue that revenue program. They must adjust their property-tax millage to account for the sales-tax revenue. School districts can use bonds and a special purpose sales tax (SPLOST) for capital outlay as approved by the voters.

State Revenue
State funding gets more focus because of the formulas used. Quality Based Education (QBE) was adopted in 1985. The statute was much broader than the formula as detailed in a Spring 2015 Agenda article. The formula is divided into direct and indirect instructional costs. The direct costs are calculated for grade levels or student categories such as students with disabilities, gifted, and remedial. The costs used are not the amount spent to educate a child but are based on weights and ratios in the formula. For instance, 15 kindergartens who attend no special classes earn funding for one teacher, but it will take 23 students in grades 4-5 to earn state funding for a teacher.

Some personnel are funded by the state based on a ratio. For example, one counselor is funded for every 450 students. Technology specialists are funded at one for every 2,475 students. For simplicity, I am using the term “student,” but the formula is based on the calculation of “FTEs” or full-time equivalent students based on the various weights. If a student is in a 4th grade classroom all day, she is 1.0375 FTEs. If the 4th grader goes to one period of special services, the FTE number will be higher.

The base for a high school student is weighted at 1.00. That is a high school student who is in no special classes such as special needs, gifted or ESOL. QBE considers a high schooler the least expensive to educate. In FY ’19, the formula generates $2,621 for a high school student. Every other group is higher. A first grader is weighted at 1.2903, which is calculated at $3,381.

Indirect costs include facility maintenance and operations at $298 per student, the media center and materials. The state provides $55.65 per high school student for instructional materials. The lowest amount goes to ESOL students at $21.49. As you can see, most costs in the formula have not been updated since its beginning in 1985, and it includes no inflation factor to automatically adjust it. Still it comes to a sizeable investment by the state. For FY ’19, the education budget totals over $10.6 billion, which is then split between the state and local districts.

The five-mill-share deduction is the local portion. There is a process to come up with the figure, but in the simplest terms, the value of five mills is deducted from the QBE total earnings as the local contribution. Local tax exemptions are not considered in the calculation. That is, the value is calculated as if you received that revenue. State law requires districts to levy at least five mills to receive QBE funding. The statewide total cannot exceed 20% of the QBE total, so the state share is at least 80%. It is the state total that is limited to the 20%, not a district’s. Five school districts lose over $100 million each with the deduction. Their combined share alone is 40% of the five-mill total for the state.

This 80/20 split in the QBE funding has led to a belief among some that the state share of education funding is supposed to be 80%. There is no such requirement. Another myth related to this calculation is that wealthier districts’ money is sent to poorer districts. Your revenue from the five mills goes nowhere except into your bank account. The amount calculated is deducted from your QBE earnings just as taxes are deducted from your gross pay.

The state also provides categorical grants for transportation, sparsity and nurses. Each has its own formula for generating an amount. Transportation is one of the biggest local costs as the state funding for it has decreased over the years. In the FY ’19 budget, the state began to once again focus a bit on this cost. Georgia is a big state, and some of its districts are really big.

*article continued on page 34*
Community
Growing Leadership, Building Relationships

Engagement

Pre-Conference Training
December 6

Exhibit Area
December 6-7

2018 GSBA/GSSA
Annual Conference
December 7-8
Inquoris “Inky” Johnson

Inky will share his story of being a charismatic leader, a bright student and a gifted athlete, who was on a path to stardom as a Tennessee Volunteer. However, his future was dramatically altered. While making a tackle, Inky severely damaged the nerves and blood vessels of his right brachial plexus. The incident left him with a paralyzed right arm and hand. Through it all, Inky never gave up hope or faith.

“Motivation” is often nothing more than forcing people to do something they don’t really want to do. In contrast, inspiration affects people from within, giving them the ability to accomplish what would otherwise be impossible. Through his walk and his talk, Inky embodies and imparts a truly inspirational message.

Johnson went on to study psychology and is now a motivational speaker at schools, community centers and ceremonies throughout the United States. He devotes much of his time to mentoring athletes and underprivileged youth. He and his amazing wife Allison live in Atlanta, Georgia with their beautiful children, Jada and Inky Jr.

Dr. Steve Constantino

Dr. Constantino is internationally recognized for his work in family engagement and his innovative, non-conventional, entrepreneurial and outlier approaches to leading organizations and acquiring impressive results. As a result of his experiences and his practical approach to engaging families, Dr. Constantino has authored four books on the subject.

He began his career as a teacher and moved through the ranks to award-winning principal and school district superintendent. At the state level, Steve served first as Chief Academic Officer and was then appointed to Acting State Superintendent by former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe. Today, Dr. Constantino continues to accept numerous invitations to speak and consult with schools, districts and business organizations around the world. He is a Senior Vice President with LivingTree Technologies and is also a clinical faculty member in the doctoral program in educational leadership at the School of Education, College of William and Mary as well as a lecturer at the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, where he teaches a course in family and community engagement.
Pre-Conference Workshops

• **Board Chair/Conflict Resolution**  
  December 6 ($230) | (6 hrs)  
  This workshop will concentrate on the challenges facing school boards and how to effectively respond when in a leadership role. Participants will also learn conflict-resolution methods and how to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement when a dispute arises. Lunch is included in the registration fee.

• **Community Engagement/Volunteer Instructional Leadership Learning Academy (VILLA)**  
  December 6 ($230) | (6 hrs)  
  Participants will understand the components of the GA Vision Project and VILLA; be shown examples of true collaboration between parents, board and superintendent; discuss strategic plans for districts and direction and movement for parent involvement and community engagement. Lunch is included in the registration fee.

• **Legal Issues**  
  December 6 ($230) Board Members ($335) Attorneys | (6 hrs)  
  GSBA has been a leader in helping local school boards interpret the complexities of laws, rules and court cases regarding public education. Attorney Phil Hartley will provide the latest information on the happenings with school law. Lunch is included in the registration fee.

• **Finance**  
  December 6 | ($230) | (6 hrs)  
  The revamped Finance Workshop is designed to be a hands-on and interactive session that will allow school district teams to learn best practices in budgeting and finance. Lunch is included in the registration fee.

Registration Information
The conference registration fee is $350. After November 16, the fee increases to $420. There are no refunds for cancellations received or postmarked after November 29. Late Fee Policy: There is a $70 additional fee per registrant for the conference (not for workshops) for on-site registrations and those received after November 29.

Lodging Info

- **Courtyard by Marriott**  
  3000 Cumberland Blvd  
  Atlanta, GA 30339  
  770.952.2555

- **Doubletree Suites Atlanta Galleria**  
  2780 Windy Ridge Parkway  
  Atlanta, GA 30339  
  770.980.1900

- **Embassy Suites Atlanta Galleria**  
  2815 Akers Mill Road  
  Atlanta, GA 30339  
  770.984.9300

- **Hilton Atlanta/Marietta Hotel & Conf. Center**  
  500 Powder Springs St.  
  Marietta, GA 30064  
  770.427.2500

- **Omni Hotel at The Battery Atlanta**  
  2625 Cir 75 Pkwy SE  
  Atlanta, GA 30339  
  678.567.7327

- **Sheraton Suites Galleria**  
  2844 Cobb Parkway  
  Atlanta, GA 30339  
  888.627.7077

- **Wyndham Atlanta Galleria**  
  6345 Powers Ferry Road  
  Atlanta, GA 30339  
  770.955.1700

When making your hotel reservations, indicate that you are attending the GSBA Annual Conference in order to get the special negotiated rate.

Visit Exhibitors
Meet companies and organizations who are knowledgeable about products and services that address the needs of your schools and your communities. Exhibitors provide solutions for one or more of your major concerns such as: responsible financial stewardship, raising student achievement and effective school safety.
We Believe in Public Education | Fall 2018

Georgia School Boards Association

Georgia School Superintendents Association

Schedule - At - A - Glance (schedule subject to change)

Thursday, December 6

7:00 a.m.  Registration Opens
8:30 a.m.  Board Chair/Conflict Resolution, Legal Issues,
Community Engagement, and Finance workshops begin
9:30 a.m.  Exhibits Open
12:00 p.m. Lunch
12:00 p.m. Board Chair Luncheon
1:00 p.m.  All Workshops Resume
4:00 p.m.  All Workshops Adjourn

Friday, December 7

7:00 a.m.  Conference Registration Opens
7:00 a.m.  Exhibits Open
7:00 a.m.  Voluntary Devotional
8:00 a.m.  First General Session  
   Speaker: Inky Johnson
10:00 a.m. Second General Session
11:30 a.m. Mini Sessions*
   Topics: Simbli, Literacy, The Hub,
   Policy/Advocacy,Georgia Vision Project,
   Strategic Improvement Planning,
   Communications, and School Safety

Saturday, December 8

8:00 a.m.  Breakfast General Session  
   Speaker: Dr. Steve Constantino
10:45 a.m. Conference Adjourns

GSBA TV and social media

We are taking the conference beyond the walls of the hotel! Connect to us wherever you are and watch short videos produced on-site and posted regularly on social media. Conference speakers, staff and others will share helpful nuggets. Our video team will be taping in several areas of the hotel. Important: Go ahead and ‘Like’ and ‘Follow’ GSBA on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn now. Prior to the conference, be sure to prepare your computer and mobile devices for access to our website (gsba.com) and The GSBA Hub. Please share your comments with us and use the conference hashtags #GSBAGSSA18 & GSBATV.
No Child Eats Alone
Students at Jenkins County Middle School have embraced a nationwide program making sure no one sits alone at lunchtime. During the program, students learned ice breakers and ways to connect with their peers. The main message is to make inclusion cool in school. The students at Jenkins County Middle have heard that message loud and clear.

Calhoun City Schools Mobile Learning Lab!
Calhoun City Schools rolled out the Jacket Junction Mobile Learning Lab in September! Superintendent, Dr. Michele Taylor shares that this unique learning experience focuses on early learning and student success and aligns with the Calhoun City Schools’ continuous improvement planning process and the Georgia Vision Project’s guiding principles. The lab, which features age-appropriate centers created by the Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher and students, travels into the local housing authority properties five times a week for hour-long sessions.
Social Circle Back-2-School Bash
Social Circle hosted a Back-2-School Bash on Tuesday, August 2 in downtown Social Circle. This successful community event for families directly impacted the students, teachers and classrooms of the City of Social Circle Schools. A special thanks to all of the business owners and industry leaders, and volunteers who made this an exciting day for all of the students!

McDuffie County Messaging
McDuffie is On the Move! – is the messaging throughout the McDuffie community this school year, and it is more than a slogan. They are working to provide their students with the best possible facilities, technology, staff, opportunities and resources. McDuffie invites their community to join in the movement as they showcase the wonderful work going on in the district each day!

For more information on these and other Spark Stories, visit sparkgaedu.org
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Dr. Mary Kay Murphy
District 5

Sue Brown
District 6

Kia Chambers
District 3

Teresa Gee Harris
District 2

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GSBA Staff Directory

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Funding Public Education (Continued from page 25)

Some of Georgia’s students are very spread out within their districts. Forty-four school districts have five or fewer students per square mile. Road maintenance has a big impact on your buses and costs. For rural districts in particular, this is a major expense.

The final element of state funding for some districts is an equalization grant. Education formulas are generally focused on the adequacy of the funding level and the equity of it. The QBE formula is designed around adequacy, although the level of adequacy is often debated. The equalization formula is an attempt to address equity. Since property values differ across the state, some school districts have a greater ability to raise local revenue than others. The state provides additional funding based on a comparison of the relative property wealth per student. Many object to the largest district in the state getting equalization, but when the number of students is considered, they qualify. No matter how much a mill brings in, they still have to educate 181,000 students. They also lose $74 million more in the five mill deduction than they receive in equalization.

The equalization grant is the reason some believe their five mills of revenue is sent to poorer districts. The grant, however, is paid from the state general revenue fund just like QBE.

There are other costs that are important such as the employer cost of providing insurance for non-certified employees, but are outside the state funding structure. That is part of the story you will need to create.

Total funding from the state for QBE, categorical grants, and equalization is $9.6 billion for FY ’19. The local portion recognized as part of the formula comes to $1.9 billion. The FY ’19 budget was cause for celebration as the state paid its complete portion for the first time in a very long time. The formula needs to be updated, but the updates will be expensive. Increases in the teacher salaries will increase the formula earnings. Adding more counselors or social workers will add to the costs. An updated formula for transportation funding will cost more state dollars. Be strategic in your requests to the new Governor and General Assembly. What changes would provide the greatest benefit for your students?

Note: The Department of Education website contains a great deal of financial information. Look under the Finance Department, the Financial Review division for links to the school system revenue, expenditures, and allotment sheets. The weights for the funding formula are also available there.

Special Reminder: The READBowl 2019 National Championship of Reading!

The READBowl 2019 National Championship of Reading – the biggest reading contest of the year – kicks off January 7, 2019. The national reading champions will be crowned on Super Bowl Sunday.

Winners will win a variety of prizes including copies of Malcolm Mitchell’s book, gift certificates for teachers to purchase more books for their classrooms, and a special message from Mitchell for the winning classrooms.

Registration for READBowl 2019 opens on November 1st and is free. You can also join Malcolm for “A Magical Evening of Literacy” on February 28, 2019 at The Foundry at Puritan Mill in Atlanta to learn more about his mission to inspire kids to read.

For more information about registration and tickets to these events and more, visit www.readwithmalcolm.com.
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