



Georgia Partnership Report Looks at Successful Middle Schools

ATLANTA -- A report by the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education identifies 12 middle schools that are witnessing great success in preparing their students for future academic and work challenges that wait. The study revealed certain commonalities that are paying dividends.

Dr. Donna O’Neal conducted this project as well as 2009 research that identified 15 Georgia high schools that had a graduation rate of at least 85 percent in 2008; increased the graduation rate by at least 10 percentage points over five years, 2004 – 2008; and sustained the 85 percent graduation rate and the 10 percent improvement through 2009. She explained that earlier study raised questions about what characteristics might be found in successful middle schools that ultimately contribute to the success of high schools.

O’Neal found that although the strategies for success varied, a set of commonalities became evident. “Teachers and administrators work collaboratively to create and use tools, including professional learning, to ensure rigor and effective instruction in each classroom,” she explained.

In multiple cases O’Neal discovered students are assessed to determine the level of the mastery of standards, and the schools provide remediation to students who do not master the standards. “The use of data and continuous improvement processes is something we saw over and over again,” she added.

The 12 middle schools studied in the research include Alton C. Crews, Gwinnett County; Forest Park and Morrow (Clayton County); Fulton Science Academy, Fulton County; Lindley, Cobb County; Loganville, Walton County; Lumpkin County; Rising Starr, Fayette County; Risley Early College Academy, Glynn County; Riverwatch, Forsyth County; Union County; and Washington-Wilkes, Wilkes County.

O’Neal emphasized that although the research project revealed many successful commonalities, it is also valuable in raising more questions that deserve further study. “We must do a better job in identifying potential dropouts and creating research-based strategies for transitions of students from one level to the next,” she added.

Both an executive summary and the longer, detailed report are available on the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education web site at www.gpee.org (Reports Page). The 85/10 High School report is also available there. A grant from AT&T provided funding for the research.

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