

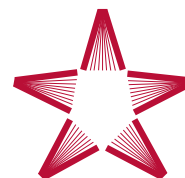
School Improvement

Accepting the Challenge

*Change Takes
Commitment and Action*



The “How To’s” of Community Planning



GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

The Economics of Education

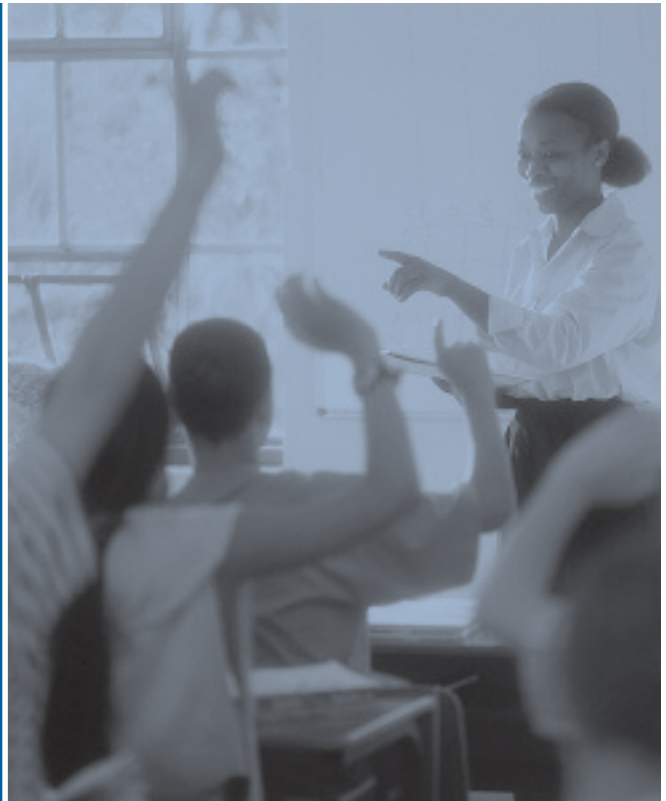
The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education has embarked on a journey to spotlight the importance of education, particularly its significance to the economic growth of the state and individual communities.

The Partnership in cooperation with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce published *The Economics of Education*, a booklet that clearly explains the inextricable link between education and prosperity. The journey has taken this message to audiences throughout Georgia: If the community is to flourish, it must ensure an educated workforce.

FACTS

- Citizens who are poorly educated have reduced earning potential, increased unemployment and limited opportunities.
- Poor education hurts everyone. Inferior schools send business development elsewhere.
- Poorly educated citizens means less buying power, more social welfare, higher crime rates.
- If adult Georgians had completed high school at the national average of 84% (25-year-olds), the state's economy would be boosted by more than \$44 million annually.*
- If adult Georgians had completed college at the national average of 26%, the state's economy would be increased by \$245 million annually.*

* Georgia Southern University study, *The Economic Impact of High School Non-completion in Georgia*, 2003. Georgia high school completion rate approximately 69% (compares entering 9th graders with graduating seniors four years later) college graduate rate, approximately 20%.



How Is Your Community Doing?

Good? Not so good? Not sure? It's time to find out and then take steps to support and improve your local school system even if it already enjoys a good reputation.

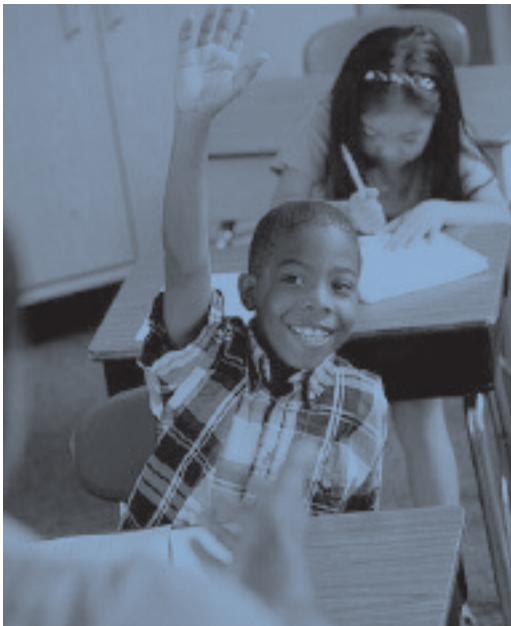
Leaders in one Georgia community, Elbert County, after hearing the Economics of Education briefing, decided it was time to get involved.

Following is their story and how they are making a difference today. The lessons shared start here but the full story and how your community can get involved are available on the Partnership Web site at www.gpee.org. **First, read on . . .**

The Elbert County Story

It was March, 2005, when 75 community leaders representing the local Chamber of Commerce, school system and Board of Education, hospital authority and various business and civic groups heard the Economics of Education presentation and pledged to create a community action plan that would ensure support for and involvement in the school system's School Improvement Plan.

- A community leader met with the Georgia Partnership staff and requested assistance in creating a draft "Purpose of Committee" and "Action Process" which would support the school system's improvement initiatives.
- The Elbert County "Economics of Education Committee" was established. Its purpose: Design, implement, and evaluate a system in which the business community of Elbert County will work to support the school system's Improvement Plan.
- Leadership "buy-in" was critical to success, and key community leaders were aggressively recruited.
- A one-day planning session, facilitated by the Partnership, began with members expressing why the effort was important to them. Heartfelt responses quickly separated this from "just another committee" to a program with very personal investments.



"There is no question that the economic future of our students and the businesses of our community are directly linked to the success of our efforts to improve the educational level of both. The quality of life in our community is greatly affected by the educational level of our citizens and this must be a continuum from the home to the schools to the businesses."

Jim Lloyd, 2006 - 2007 Chairman
Elbert County Chamber of Commerce

"The steps we are taking today will ensure that our kids become the productive citizens needed to secure Elbert County's economic future."

Phyllis Brooks, President
Elbert County Chamber of Commerce

At This Session

1. The school superintendent emphasized his system's support and appreciation of the committee's work.

2. A thorough briefing on the system's "School Improvement Plan" was presented. Each goal area was identified.

- Student learning
- Planning and organization
- Leadership capacity
- Rigorous curriculum
- Best practices in the classroom
- Volunteers in the school
- Graduation rate
- Parental involvement

3. A brainstorming session resulted in four priorities:

- Community awareness of the importance of education
- Early learning
- Graduation rate
- Parental involvement

4. Committee divided into goal teams to address the priorities and then develop an action plan on how the community could support the School Improvement Plan.

5. Each team asked to develop:

- Goal statement
- Strategies
- Timelines
- Who's responsible
- Evaluations



■ Action plan was approved and announced to the community through the local media. It is available publicly through the various Web sites of the school system, Chamber of Commerce, Community Partnership and Georgia Partnership.

■ Goal teams continue to work to implement the activities of the action plan. The committee meets quarterly to monitor progress, analyze data and determine where changes are needed.

These dedicated Elbert County visionaries are making a difference. So can you. They have documented their work to provide a helpful template. Read on . . .

Help is Just a "Click" Away!

A step-by-step 43 page replication manual is available on the Partnership Web site at www.gpee.org. Click on "Programs."

The Georgia Partnership and the Elbert County Economics of Education Committee have "learned by doing" and want to make things as easy as possible for other communities who might want to develop their own school improvement program.

Personal consultation is available from the Elbert County team. Laura Evans, Committee Chair, Community Partnership of Elbert County, is the driving force behind the effort. She is available at: levanspec@yahoo.com or 706-283-8838.

The Partnership's point of contact is Dr. Donna O'Neal. She facilitated the development of the Elbert County plan and is available at doneal@mindspring.com.

If your community has developed a school system support plan, we'd like to hear about it. Drop Donna a note at the above address or call the Partnership at 404-223-2464.

"The Economics of Education Committee has been the catalyst Elbert County needed to build true collaboration between the public and private sectors of our community."

Laura Evans, Executive Director
Community Partnership of Elbert County



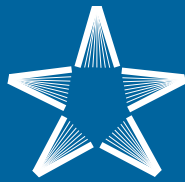
"The Economics of Education Committee is bringing our entire community together to focus on the importance of education today and leadership in the future."

Samuel P. Light
Superintendent of Elbert County Schools



"The citizens of Elbert County know how important their education system is to their economic future. The proof is in their willingness to roll up their sleeves in order to make a difference. They realize that education is economic development. Other communities would be wise to follow their footsteps."

Dr. Steve Dolinger, President
Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education



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