



Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership Schools: Graduation Middle-High

Part of the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Initiative

How can the Georgia Virtual Family – Friendly Partnership Schools make a difference in the way your school looks and operates? We know schools are busy places with many responsibilities, however between all the action sometimes our families feel disconnected from the school. The following stories provide realistic scenarios of experiences when parents, families, or community volunteers have not felt welcome in their school. While these scenarios are not the norm everywhere, they occasionally happen. So take a minute to read through them and then check out the Georgia Virtual Family – Friendly Partnership Schools to see what changes you can make!

Family - Friendly Front Office?

Susan Miller is a local business owner who signed up at a recent community fair to volunteer as a student mentor at Graduation Middle – High School. Mrs. Miller and her husband have no children and recently moved into the area to start a new business venture. They recently became members of the local Chamber of Commerce and it was at their fall community fair where she learned of the Chamber’s partnership with the school system. Mrs. Miller is excited about serving as a student mentor and arrives at the school extra early to ensure she is on time. The secretary at the front office warmly greets her as she enters and asks her how she can be of help. Mrs. Miller explains that she is here to serve as a student mentor, but is slightly early. The secretary asks her to sign in and then instructs her to have a seat until it is closer to her appointment time. As Mrs. Miller waits she looks around and notices that the walls of the front office are quite bare. There is no information displayed on past or upcoming school events. There are a few pictures scattered around, but they definitely do not represent the diverse nature of the school community. She thinks to herself that even some student artwork would go a long way to provide people waiting in the office with something to enjoy. After waiting, the secretary calls Mrs. Miller to the desk and instructs her to go to the Student Resource Center to meet the student she will be mentoring. Having never been to the school before, Mrs. Miller asks for a school map to help her navigate the school since she finds it quite large and the layout confusing. In fact, she shares with the secretary that the last time she was here she got lost a few times trying to get to the media center. The secretary apologizes but says there is no school map available, so she provides her with verbal directions and points her in the right direction.

After visiting the front office in Graduation Middle – High School, how can the school encourage community support and volunteer participation by making the office more family – friendly?



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Family - Friendly Classroom?

Janice Reynolds is a 10th grader at Graduation Middle-High School. Her father, Mr. Reynolds just received an urgent letter stating that his daughter is in danger of repeating her 10th grade year because she is failing Mathematics. The school indicates that Janice's teacher mailed a letter to Mr. Reynolds a number of times; however, upon further investigation it's discovered that the letter was mailed to the address on Janice's 9th grade enrollment information. Janice and her father moved over the summer due to a divorce and Mr. Reynolds is trying to do his best as a single father. He is not an overly active parent, but does care about his daughter's success. He also remembers submitting a change of address form at the beginning of the school year. Mr. Reynolds contacts the school to schedule a meeting with "whoever" can help and is told that he will have to talk to the Mathematics teacher whom he has never met. After calling twice, Mr. Reynolds is able to schedule a meeting with the Mathematics teacher, Ms. Bliss. During the meeting, Ms. Bliss informs Mr. Reynolds that she understands there was an error in Janice's home address but she did send out multiple letters regarding his daughter's struggles in her class. At this point, Mr. Reynolds is very frustrated because extra steps were not made to contact him about his child's performance when responses to notices were not received. In addition, he is also confused because he was not sure what his child should have been learning or how he could have assisted her with her studies.

After visiting the classroom in Graduation Middle-High School, what steps can Ms. Bliss take in her classroom to ensure communication and expectations of student learning are clear to parents in an effort to make it more family – friendly?

Family - Friendly Principal's Office?

Trey Smith is a 7th grader at Graduation Middle – High School. His aunt, Ms. Jones, who is also his legal guardian has called the school to request a meeting with the principal to discuss a few issues of concern, mainly Trey's recent and frequent disruptive behavior. Ms. Jones is particularly eager to finally attend this meeting as the principal has rescheduled this meeting twice and she hopes to work out a solution regarding Trey's recent issues as soon as possible for the benefit of everyone. Ms. Jones arrives for the meeting and is warmly welcomed by the Principal into her office. However, upon entering it takes a moment for the principal to make adequate room for both of them to sit down and meet in a semi-clear area as the office is very cluttered. Ms. Jones begins addressing her concerns to the principal, but throughout the meeting she feels disrespected as the principal is constantly interrupted with calls and emails that she continuously checks and takes. While the Principal does apologize for the interruptions, by the end of the meeting Ms. Jones still feels like nothing has been accomplished and her time has been wasted. The principal assures her that she is going to do her best to resolve the issues, but Ms. Jones still leaves wondering how since she does not believe she was able to fully communicate them.



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Family - Friendly Principal's Office? (continued)

After visiting the principal's office in Graduation Middle – High School, what could be done by the principal to ensure that school is open to engaging in regular, two-way meaningful communication by being more family – friendly?

Family - Friendly Student Resource Center?

Hailey Hopper is in the 11th grade at Graduation Middle – High School. She lives with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Little and is the first person in her immediate family that has aspirations to attend college after high school. The Littles are supportive and excited for their granddaughter, but are not sure how to help her. Therefore, they go to the high school to seek information on the steps to take in selecting a college and applying for financial aid. This is the first time that they are going through this process so they find everything quite overwhelming. When they arrive at the front office they are given directions to the student resource center and told they need to speak with a counselor. Once they reach the student resource center they find a locked door unmarked without the counselor's name or hours that the student resource center is open. Therefore, the Littles leave still unsure of who the counselor is or how the counselor can be reached. Being persistent, the Littles return a couple of days later and are excited that the counselor is now there. After explaining their situation with the counselor, he gives them some pamphlets to read, some websites for research and his email address to contact him if they have any questions. Frustrated, the Littles leave the counselor's office discouraged and confused especially since they don't even own a computer!

After visiting the student resource center in Graduation Middle-High School, what are some services and resources that the student resource center could have offered Hailey's grandparents to make it more family – friendly?