

EDUCATION REPORT / MICHELLE E. SHAW, mshaw@ajc.com

Parents can prepare kids for curriculum tests

Last week Fulton County students in grades 1-8 started taking the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests, a series of tests that measure mastery of the curriculum. Testing continues this week and is scheduled to end Thursday.

All third-graders must score at or above expectations in reading on the CRCT to graduate to the fourth grade. Likewise, students in fifth and eighth grades who score below

the standard in reading and math cannot go to the next grade unless they attend summer school and pass makeup tests.

Fulton County school officials say they expect most students will pass. There are a few things that parents can do to help children do their best while taking the test.

Here are some tips from various school counselors on what parents can do:

- ▶ Make sure your child attends school regularly and on time. Remember that tests reflect the overall achievement of your child. Time spent in learning situations increases the likelihood that students will do well on tests.
- ▶ Avoid scheduling doctor's or dentist's appointments during testing times. Make those appointments for after school or on a day not affected by spring testing, if possible.
- ▶ Give your child encouragement. Highlight things done well throughout the year. A child who is afraid of failing is more likely to make a mistake.
- ▶ Ensure that your child has a well-rounded diet. A healthy body leads to a healthy, active mind. Make sure the child has a good breakfast on testing days and every day.
- ▶ Keep the lines of communication open between home and school. Parents and teachers should work together to benefit

the child.

- ▶ Make sure your child is well-rested. Children who are tired are less likely to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of class work and tests.
- ▶ Don't judge a child on the basis of a single test. Test scores are not perfect measures of what a child can do. There are many other things that might influence a test score. For example, a child can be affected by the way he or she feels that day.
- ▶ Follow normal routines. Interruptions of normal routines may affect your child's performance.
- ▶ Don't forget glasses. If your child wears glasses, a hearing aid or another device that assists in learning, be sure he or she remembers to take it to school and wear it during all testing sessions.

Webb Bridge Middle

The March Madness Reading Tournament held March 6-31 was a huge success. Students kept a log of the number of minutes they read during the duration of the tournament, and they had an adult sign the log verifying the number of minutes read. Students could read books, magazines, newspapers, comic books, graphic novels and narrative portions of science, social studies and literature textbooks.

More than 890 students read for more than 1,014,000 minutes during the basketball games. Members of the winning team, who read for 79,720 minutes, are Albert Abedi, Murphy Green, Lawrence Luo, Jay Cofield, Fred Hong, Deron Mai, Nathan Corbin, Young Kim, Baabak Mostoufi, Alexandra Edquist, Chris Lu, Kunal Naik,

Ananth Punyala, Lily Qiu and David Zisek.

New Prospect Elementary

For the second year in a row, administrators and teachers hosted a CRCT Pep Rally for the student body. The rally, held Monday, was to encourage students to perform their best on the CRCT test. The event included music, cheers, helpful test-taking strategies and lots of audience participation. Using pompoms, wearing special T-shirts and displaying posters, staff members excited students with jumps, organized cheers and even pyramids. An addition to this year's rally was the small band combo that entertained the students as they filed into the school cafeteria. The school mascot, Panther Pete, was also in attendance.

Loe: New superintendent makes early impression on board skeptic

Continued from ZH1

"I want to make sure every student in Fulton County has a chance to succeed at the highest level possible," she said. "That will involve making sure schools have all of the materials and support they need, and I want to do that."

She's already made changes in the math curriculum for next year and beyond. At her first school board workshop, she recommended the district adopt a plan that will blend traditional and nontraditional teaching methods. The board liked the plan and adopted it on the spot.

Changes like that are what Linda Schultz, the District 1 school board representative, hopes to see more of.

"Her strengths are curriculum and instruction," she said. "I'm really interested to see her address some of our other needs in that area."

Schultz is one of two board members who abstained from voting to hire Loe. She said her abstention was not a mark on Loe's abilities.

"It wasn't that I didn't think she could do the job, it was just at that time I wanted to continue the process of looking at other candidates with a bit more experience," she said. "Now that we've hired Dr. Loe, I'm behind her 100 percent and I think she knows that."

Loe said she was not at all swayed by the less-than-unanimous vote she received. In fact, it made her want to work harder, she said. Loe said her goal is to work closely with the board and "come to a consensus as often as possible."

WHERE DID THEY GO?

Former Fulton County superintendents

Stephen Dolinger

▶ July 20, 1995 — Sept. 1, 2002

▶ Became president of the nonprofit Georgia Partnership for Excellence

Michael Payne (interim)

▶ Sept. 1, 2002 — June 1, 2003

▶ He had retired from Fulton County schools when he was appointed as interim superintendent

John Haro

▶ June 1, 2003 — Oct. 24, 2003

▶ Moved back to Minnesota with his family

Michael Vanairsdale

▶ Oct. 25, 2003 — Feb. 10, 2005

▶ Took job with Georgia's Leadership Institute for School Improvement

James Wilson

▶ Feb. 10, 2005 — April 1, 2008

▶ Retired

THE CINDY LOE FILE

▶ Age: 50

▶ Family: Married with two adult daughters and a Yorkshire terrier named Mogli.

▶ Experience: Has held the positions of teacher, assistant principal and middle school principal and has more than 26 years in public education.

▶ Education: She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Georgia State University, her master's degree in middle-grade and gifted education from Armstrong State College in Savannah, and her doctorate in educational leadership from Georgia State.

Loe says she is enthusiastic about working with school staff, parents and community members. She plans to speak to various groups about her plans.

"I want people to know I'm accessible," she said. "I want to know what people have to say. That will help me do my job better."

Earlier this month, College Park hosted a reception in her honor and invited several leaders from other cities in south Fulton.

"That was so we could get to know her and she could get to know us," said College Park Mayor Jack Longino. "You've got to know people if you want to work together."

Longino said he got a "good vibe" from Loe and he thinks she'll be good for the system.

One of the things Loe plans on tackling is the

chasm that exists between north and south Fulton schools. Test scores have traditionally been lower in the southern part of the county, but this doesn't have to be, she said. She has plans to visit each school to assess the needs there and make adjustments as needed.

"She's walked into several unresolved challenges here," said District 7 representative Julia Bernath, the school board president. "But that hasn't deterred her, and I think that says something about her."

Loe said this job is a "dream come true," but she knows this is no fairy tale.

"I want to push students, all students, to do the best they can, and that's not going to be easy," she said. "But that's what I'm committed to do."

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