



# The Connector

Doing whatever it takes as a community working together for the success of all of our children!

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## CCSD GRADUATION RATES UP SHARPLY

the Georgia Department of Education released 2015 4-year cohort graduation rates – with the Clarke County School District’s rate above 80%, an increase of more than 17%. The state’s graduation rate is 78.8%. This 4-year cohort method is based on the number of students that graduate within four years, plus one summer.

The 4-year cohort data since its inception is below:

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Clarke County School District</b>	66.1%	70.1%	69.5%	63.2%	80.3%
<b>Cedar Shoals High School</b>	67.8%	73.6%	75.9%	68.2%	83.3%
<b>Clarke Central High School</b>	70.8%	76.7%	76.3%	71.3%	84.2%
<b>Classic City High School</b>	36.8%	28.1%	20.8%	20.7%	50.7%

“The targeted work taking place in our schools has been tremendous, and I commend the teachers, administrators, students, parents and all support staff for helping push our

graduation rate over 80%," said Superintendent Philip Lanoue. "We, as a district and community, have come together in our belief that all students can achieve, we plan to build on this watershed moment. We have created sustaining capacity in our system, and we are all working together to ensure that everything we do affects our students in a way that helps them achieve and reach their goals."



## Changing the Picture for Athens Children Awards Dinner Honors Great Leaders, Raises Funds

Family Connection-Communities In Schools of Athens hosted our first annual Changing the Picture for Athens Children Awards Dinner on August 29th, honoring Bertis & Katherine Downs, Ed Benson, and Jack Lumpkin. It was a spectacular success. Tickets sold out through sponsorships three weeks in advance and more than 200 guests packed Broad 9A to honor these extraordinary citizens for their lifetimes of service for Athens children and youth. They were also happy to enjoy delectable food from Five & Ten, as well as wine and beer donated by Five Points Bottle Shop, with beautiful flower arrangements donated by Always, Always Flowers. Special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor, Athens Regional Health System, all 40 of our sponsors, all our guests, and the honorees.



**Bertis and Katherine Downs** are publicly known for Bertis being manager of international rock superstars R.E.M. They are the parents of two beautiful and good-hearted daughters, one of whom just left for college after graduating from Clarke Central in the spring, the other in her second year at Clarke Middle School.

Bertis has been an informed and tireless advocate on public education policy at the national, state and local levels, pulling people together to support public schools with everything from sharing important articles to establishing newspaper and billboard advertisements, helping organize conferences and connect experts with each other,

educating legislators and other policy-makers about issues and concerns vital to public education.

Katherine served on the Board of Prevent Child Abuse Athens and helped build Starry Starry Night into a major fundraiser for that organization. She and Sally Coenen were the founders of A Taste of Athens, Community Connection's largest fundraiser, which also supported Family Connection before those two organizations separated. She was a key supporter in building Experience UGA, through which all Clarke County public school students visit campus on a field trip each year. She has been actively involved in PTO/PTSO for more than a decade, serves on the Board of the Clarke County Mentor Program, and is a Girl Scout Leader.

Bertis and Katherine have both served as mentors, and are active with the Foundation for Excellence in Public Education.

They are key supporters of Family Connection-Communities In Schools.



**Joseph “Jack” Lumpkin** has served 40 years in law enforcement in Athens, including nearly 18 years as Chief of Police, and Georgia Police Chief of the Year in 2014. When he returned to Athens in 1997 as Chief, the Athens-Clarke County Police Department became one of the most engaged partners in Family Connection. He dedicated time and talent to addressing his often-stated axiom that the best way to prevent crime is to develop youth. He served on the Family Connection-Communities In Schools Board

of Directors for several years, and assigned Terrie Patterson and Tony Howard from the Department to serve since then. He also assigned members of the Police Department to work on Strategic Action Teams that developed, implemented, and evaluated the Athens Community Plan for Children. He assigned an outstanding officer, Katie Jones, to work with the Neighborhood Leaders program. He embedded Community Oriented Policing, brought Weed & Seed to Athens (the “Seed” being youth development), initiated the Youth Police Academy, and more – a true collaborator. Chief Lumpkin built a culture that all ACCPD employees would engage in supporting children and youth in Athens — mentoring, coaching, tutoring, serving on a Board of an organization supporting them. He has called Family Connection-Communities In Schools “the most effective crime prevention program in Athens.”



**Edsel “Ed” Benson** is a highly successful business owner and long-time philanthropic presence in the Classic City. He was one of the original mentors for the Clarke County Mentor Program and was its first Chairman of the Board.

He worked with Michael Thurmond to bring white leadership and black leadership to the table together to build understanding about each other, and to support education, youth development, public safety, racial interaction and employment.

In 1961, he joined other business leaders state-wide in opposing proposals that came very close to passing to close public schools in order to prevent integration.

In addition to the Mentor Program, he has been a leader in the Athens Rotary Club, Boys & Girls Club, Athens First United Methodist Church and Meals on Wheels.



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## Athens Regional Health System Announces New Initiatives for Children

At the Changing the Picture for Athens Children Awards Dinner, presenting partner Athens Regional Health System C.E.O. Chuck Peck not only expressed commitment to continued collaboration as a strong FC-CIS partner in general, he announced specific **new initiatives demonstrating ARHS's expanded commitment to children's health and well-being.**

He announced that the Hospital plans to open a high quality, **24-7 child care center**, filling an important need not only for their own employees but also for the community (which currently has exactly zero 24 hour child care centers).

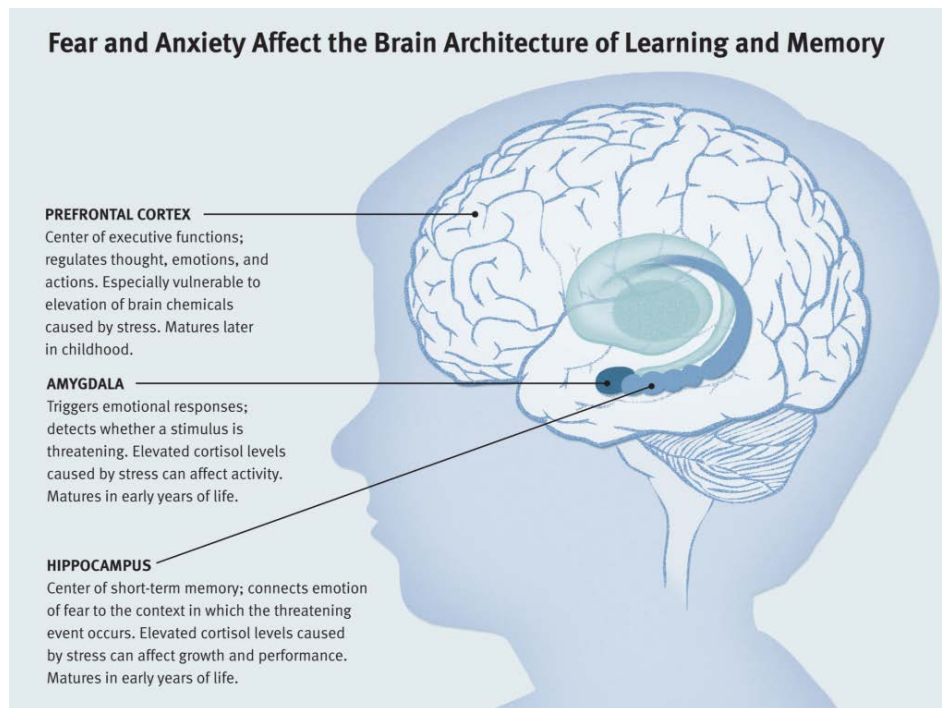
He also announced developing initiatives regarding **children's health care**, including a likely partnership with Children's Health Care System of Atlanta.

Children's health care is not as lucrative as many areas of the health care system and consequently often gets less attention than is needed.

**This is a major commitment** by Dr. Peck and ARHS and is crucially important to children and youth in Athens and the surrounding counties served.

**Thank you, Dr. Peck and Athens Regional Health System!**





## Partnering with Harvard Center on the Developing Child's Frontiers of Innovation

We are one of six initial community partnerships in the nation (including one in Atlanta along with us) selected to work with Frontiers of Innovation (an initiative of the renowned Harvard Center on the Developing Child) to develop innovative practices to support healthy develop in the early years, especially related to toxic stress.

**Ellyn Cochran with GEEARS** (Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students) is facilitating the collaboration for the two Georgia sites.

UGA College of Education professors **Cynthia Vail, Rebecca Lieberman-Betz and Jenny Brown** are leading our initial Frontiers of Innovation project, addressing development of children ages 0 to 3 with high stress.

As Dr. Vail wrote, "It is well known that responsive caregiving is the base for healthy early social emotional development. Responsive caregivers read the cues of infants and toddlers and respond in a manner that is warm and nurturing. The synchrony of the interactions between the infant and caregiver builds the foundation for later interaction patterns. A wealth of studies has demonstrated the importance of responsive parenting, including interventions targeting the parents' use of responsive interactions with their infants. While researchers have identified the importance of high quality group child-care and have determined a link between quality of childcare and infant stress, research is needed to determine how to impact the quality of care and provider responsiveness in child care centers serving low-income children.

". . . The objective of the proposed project is to develop and test an intervention package to support and increase childcare providers' use of responsive practices with infants and toddlers in their classrooms. The long term goal is to prevent infant/toddler stress and support their healthy early social emotional development which in turn sets the stage for optimal development across developmental domains."

The initial work will be done in Early Head Start classrooms, following Fol's emphasis on working within high quality programs to develop and implement innovative "micro-projects," with high quality evaluation to determine effectiveness before taking it to scale.



Huge

**Increases in Summer Lunch and School Breakfast & Lunch**

In 2013, Grady College Dean Charles Davis requested our help connecting the College with local summer lunch providers, with the goal of developing ways to increase summer lunch participation. That summer, a Grady p.r. capstone class taught by Juan Meng developed some strategies, and in summer of last year, a class taught by Myra Blackmon worked specifically with Paula Farmer of the School District to develop a new mobile lunch program. The results were phenomenal. In 2015, nutritious lunches prepared by the School District were provided to children as follows:

- 9 mobile lunch sites served an average of 300 meals/day
- Meals served through CCSD school sites & mobile lunch sites: 45,900
- Meals served through 25 Athens Housing Authority-administered community sites: 44,385
- Meals served through 2 Food Bank of NE Ga-administered sites: 4,100

**TOTAL SUMMER MEALS SERVED IN 2015: 94,351 (in 2014, 67,000 were served).**

That's a **40.8% increase in one year!** On top of that, Action Ministries worked with the NE Georgia Food Bank to put together weekend "Food to Kids" bags which were delivered each Friday through mobile lunch program to

**Neighborhood Leaders Work with Early Head Start & with Gang Prevention Task Force**

Our Neighborhood Leaders program is often called upon to assist with partners' efforts. Two current examples are Early Head Start and the Gang Prevention/Youth Development Task Force. In the former, Neighborhood Leaders Director Terris Thomas and current Neighborhood Leaders are training Early Head Start parents on the general role of Neighborhood Leaders and on hosting Living Room Conversations, focus groups in their homes where they will engage their neighbors (and themselves) in identifying the needs of pregnant moms and moms with very young children (under age 3), and help connect them with Early Head Start and related supports.



The Gang Prevention Task



**Start Georgia, Healthy Families Pilot Launched in Athens**

Tierra Smith, Annette Maynor, and Kaitlyn Barrow begun work with the **Healthy Families pilot Great Start Georgia childcare-center-based program**. Funds were provided through the Early Education Empowerment Zone (E<sup>3</sup>Z). Little Angels is the initial center. In addition to Great Start Georgia and Prevent Child Abuse Athens, E<sup>3</sup>Z coordinator Clayton Adams played a key role in getting it started. The pilot project includes initially meeting with at risk families with young children (0 to 3) in Little Angels, then reaching out through the Midwifery Clinic and other settings. One or more additional child care centers that serve CAPS families and have become Quality Rated will be added. All participating children will be screened periodically across multiple domains to assure appropriate development and, if needed, quick intervention to address any delays or issues. In weekly home visits, staff will work with parents to support and model practices promoting healthy child development.

Very much related to this, and thanks primarily to work by Adams, Little Angels plans to open a new child care center in ARCH, the cluster of services for families and others suffering homelessness under construction near Clarke County DFCS. The center will serve 13 children who are homeless and three times that many others. Through E<sup>3</sup>Z, there may be some



300 kids per week for 7 weeks.

This school year, Clarke County School District converted to a universal free breakfast and lunch at school (no one pays).

Last year, 73.3% of students had school lunch in September; this year, 85.6% did.

Last year, 43.8% had school breakfast in September. This year, 54.3% did.

Improving nutrition is among the health goals of Clarke County School District as well as the community. This is another area where real progress is being achieved!

Force asked for help from Neighborhood Leaders with Community Conversations, discussions in seven Athens neighborhoods with relatively high juvenile crime rates. Four Neighborhood Leaders volunteered to help facilitate these discussions, and Dawn Meyers (who, along with Lemuel LaRoche, is staffing the task force) described them as "incredibly helpful and important" to the Conversations.

start-up funding opportunities for the new site.



### Strategic Action Teams Preparing Plans

- Becoming a Trauma-Informed Community.
- Providing comprehensive college and career options for *all* students.
- Engaging Neighborhood Leaders in schools and other roles throughout the community.
- Providing healthy lunches in the summer to all kids who need them.
- Reducing childhood obesity.
- Moving toward 100% participation in the Quality Rated system by child care providers.
- Addressing issues outside the classroom to help achieve success in the classroom.
- Providing the support students need to be successful in school and in life.
- Preventing gang involvement.
- Continuing to reduce teen pregnancy.
- Expanding early childhood opportunities so that all children begin school healthy and ready to succeed.
- Expanding availability of foster homes so foster children are no longer shipped out of the community, while working to reduce the need for foster homes.

These are some of the areas being addressed by our Strategic Action Teams as we look to the future in developing a new Strategic Plan for Children and their families, doing whatever it takes as a community working together for the success of all our children.

Please join any of our Strategic Action Teams, whose professional chairs are listed:

Safety & Community Stability Strategic Action Team: Robin Shearer, Juvenile Court Judge

K-12 Strategic Action Team: Dr. Janna Dresden, Director of UGA College of Education Office of School Engagement

Health & Wellness Strategic Action Team: Jennifer Richardson, Athens Neighborhood Health Center Director of Marketing & Outreach

Early Care & Learning Strategic Action Team: (serves as Zero to Eight Team for the E<sup>3</sup>Z): Tim Johnson, FC-CIS Executive Director; staffed with Clayton Adams, Georgia Department of Early Care & Learning's Clarke E<sup>3</sup>Z coordinator

Family, Neighborhood & Community Engagement Strategic Action Team (Neighborhood Leaders): Katie Jones, Athens-Clarke County Police; staffed by Terris Thomas, FC-CIS Director of Neighborhood Leaders

Post-Secondary & Career Strategic Action Team: Dr. Darris Means, UGA Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, and Kimberly Bennett of Cultivating a Lifetime of Legacy

For a calendar of meetings,  
visit our website at [www.fc-cis.org](http://www.fc-cis.org), or  
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