

# Remarks of Lt. Governor Casey Cagle

April 17, 2009

Innovation in Education Conference

Georgia International Convention Center

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Thank you Ashley...it is a privilege for me to be with you this morning.

First, I must start by thanking the many individuals, agencies and organizations that came together to make this event possible. Thank you to the Technical College System of Georgia, the Georgia Department of Education, the University Systems of Georgia, the Ford Motor Company Fund, and our many organization and industry supporters. It is a great privilege to share the stage with Skills USA and CEFGA; organizations that help students like Ashley become our leaders of tomorrow.

Let me also thank each of you who came from areas all across Georgia, members of the education community and those of you representing your local Chambers of Commerce and business communities. Thank you for taking your valuable time and making this event a priority to attend.

We are all here because we share a common goal...to make education in Georgia the best in the nation. We approach that goal from different perspectives and we want to achieve that goal for different reasons. The education community knows they have a duty to prepare their students for whatever the future may hold. The business leaders know without a highly skilled and educated workforce, the economy in Georgia will suffer, and their business will suffer.

However, at the end of the day, we aren't just educators or business leaders...we are parents as well. And, as parents, we want a world-class education for all students in Georgia -- because that's what we want for our own kids.

I am the father of three boys. So, I want the best opportunities for each of them, just as I want the best opportunities for every student in Georgia. I have seen first hand the different ways in which they have matured as students and the different ways that they approach learning. Each one of them is unique, and each one of them is motivated to learn through different means. My oldest son is a reader...give him a book and he'll read it, absorb the information, and find the answers. My middle child is a visual

learner....he likes to be able to visualize problems and to see how things work.

My youngest son will be entering high school soon. As a father, I want him to have every opportunity to succeed on the path wants to choose. And to do so, we need to see what paths are currently available to him and what we can do to make them better.

Right now, when my son enters high school, he doesn't have lot of choices. His primary option will be a standardized 4-year high school curriculum that leaves very little flexibility to cater to his individual needs and interests. His school may not have access to the latest technology and there could be times the coursework may not be relevant to what he wants to do. I am sure my son will be in a similarly styled classroom as I was in over 20 years ago; in fact, it could actually be the same classroom.

When he graduates from high school, my son will have the choice of finding a job, attending a technical college, or attending a four-year college.

I want you all to understand, I am well aware of all of the hard work that the State Board of Education, the Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia have been doing over the last few years. Our new high school curriculum is now more rigorous and demands higher standards for our students; our technical colleges are quickly responding to the needs of the industry in their area and our University System has some of the best research institutions in the Country. We are all doing great things to advance education in Georgia.

But today I challenge all of us to demand and do more. The ideas we share here today are not about what we have done. They are not even about what we are doing. This event is about what we are going to do.

I know there are so many other options that could be available to my son and all students in Georgia, and they are just now starting to catch fire across our state and nation. And, that is why we are all here today.

As you go throughout this conference today and take the information and ideas back to your communities, your schools and your businesses, think about what the future of education in Georgia *should* be. If we had to paint a picture of what a world-class education in this state is, what would it look like?

I believe we already have some great examples here in Georgia of world-class education...

In the upcoming school year, we will have 16 Career Academies across the state “saying to all students you can be successful. You can find a path that is of interest to you, stay in school and not only receive your high school diploma but get college credit at the same time.” Career Academies like the Central Educational Center, Walton Career Academy, Rockdale, Whitfield, Tech High and the 11 other academies who were awarded money in the last two grant cycles will be looking forward to 98% graduation rates and 100% of those get a great job or go on to college. And, in this year’s budget, we put an additional \$15 million in grant funds to continue expand career academies and provide needed support to local communities.

The Barrow County School System is one of those who has been leading the charge in bringing cutting-edge technology into the classroom. Using a technology called Internet 2, chemistry students right now are participating in laboratory experiments with professors at Georgia Tech. Astronomy students are interacting live with astronauts at NASA. And, band students are getting live one-on-one music lessons from members of the Philadelphia Orchestra. All without having to leave their classrooms. Barrow County has become a model for the world in using technology in the classroom. And, if they can do it...every school in Georgia can do it. We just have to want to make it happen for all.

Likewise, with a curriculum focused on biosciences, engineering, and emerging technologies, the Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science and Technology is nurturing the talents of high potential students and preparing them for the technological workforce. Like Barrow County, the Gwinnett School realizes the importance of integrating technology into everyday curriculum and learning for their students. Access to laptops, email and the internet, and advance engineering design programs prepare students to interact daily with the technologies vital for their success in the future.

And in Hall County, the World Language Academy at Chestnut Mountain is engaging students at the very earliest stages of their education and immersing them into a dual language program, the WLA helps students become speakers of a second language, Spanish or Mandarin Chinese. By engaging students at the highest possible level via language immersion, the WLA helps prepare student to go out and lead business in a global marketplace.

These are just a few examples and I am confident that each of you has your own success story from which you can draw inspiration.

Our state has the talent and the ability to achieve levels that we have never dreamed possible. All we need is to challenge ourselves...to let our reach exceed our grasp...and to settle for nothing less than excellence.

I hope that as you head into these meetings and presentations today, you will do it with an open mind and a desire to succeed. Do not say, "We can't do this." We can - we see it in every career academy graduate. We see it in Barrow County, in Gwinnett and in Hall. And we see it right next door at the SkillsUSA competition, where students from all over the state are saying through their actions: "we can succeed...just give us the opportunity."

It is up to us to respond to those students' expectations. To keep up the momentum and work to expand educational success to every community in Georgia.

Remember, though, that success is not found in complacency, and that we will never improve if we keep doing the same things over and over.

A world-class education is possible here in Georgia, but to get to the next level it is going to take the dedication and commitment from all of you here in this room. You are the people who will be on the front lines creating success in your local communities, so we are counting on you to make this vision a reality.

The State must and will do its part to ensure that educators have the tools, the technologies, and the talent available that lay the foundation for a world-class education. But it is up to you, the local schools boards, the businesses, the local communities to ensure that 'local control' translates into 'local achievement.'

Thank you for your commitment to the success of every child and your investment in the future of our state.

In closing, it was my intent to stay with you this morning and participate in the rest of this conference. As many of you have probably heard, my future plans have changed and for the next few months I will be taking care of my family and my health. I have asked Commissioner Ron Jackson to step in my place for the rest of today. Thank you all for your support; it is an honor to serve as your Lt. Governor.