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The Power of Story: Creating Soul in a School

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The Power of Story: Creating Soul in a School

Chestatee Elementary, Forsyth County Schools

Introductions

Dr. Polly Tennies, Principal

9 years as Principal

33 years in education



Meg Killingsworth, Family Engagement Coordinator

5 years as Family Engagement Coordinator

22 years in education



Let's Meet the Audience!

Raise Your Hand and Get Ready for a Selfie!



Principals?	Assistant Principals?	Social Workers/ Counselors?	Family Engagement Coordinators?
Teachers?	Other School Staff?	Private Sector?	Other?

The History of Chestatee...

9 years ago....

- Title I School
- Parent involvement in academics was low.
- New principal after several principals in a short amount of time.
- Many Family Engagement Coordinators over a short amount of time.
- Lowest academic scores in county even though our staff was working very hard.

What Changed?

- We had a principal with a vision for a turnaround school.
- The principal set the bar with staff for creating a warm, welcoming climate.
- Families felt welcomed at our school.
- 2015 began the adventure of Chestatee becoming an award winning school.



Over Time...

- *Family engagement became the priority.*
- *We started working very hard to get to know our families and their needs.*
- *We spent time training our staff on working with families.*

As a result, family engagement increased greatly in our school. There is a power in stories. Stories have been a huge part of our success.



“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” -Theodore Roosevelt

VIDEO

Step 1: Learn the Stories

How We Learned the Stories:

Friendly faces for the school: receptionist, office staff, family engagement coordinator, counselors, social worker, admin

Welcome families in: morning walk-ins, volunteering, class parties and special programs

Share team, family need surveys

Have a designated space for parents family members

Welcome for lunch every day

Donations for personal needs: social worker closet, gift cards, Blessings in a Backpack

Friendly Faces



Welcoming Families In



Chestatee Elementary

Published by Lisa Chestatee [?] · January 29 at 9:30 AM · 🌐

⋮

Our January Coffee Chat is tomorrow from 9:00-10:00 in the Family Resource Room. Join Dr. Tennes, Meg and other families for a cup of coffee if you can!





Get Connected at Chestatee!

<p><u><i>PTO</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Classroom Volunteer</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Room Parent</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Watchdog Dad</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Kindergarten Readers</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Champs/ Grand Champs</i></u></p> 
<p>Become a member. Sign-up to volunteer</p>	<p>Help as needed with centers, copy work, send in items</p>	<p>Help coordinate parties/ special events, communicate needs with families</p>	<p>Come 1 day a year. Visit news, car line, buses, lunch, classrooms</p>	<p>Read to kids and listen to readers. Practice sight words or letters</p>	<p>Read 1 on 1 with children. Build skills and relationships</p>
<p>Contact PTO</p>	<p>Contact classroom teacher</p>	<p>Contact classroom teacher</p>	<p>Contact Lori Cox</p>	<p>Contact Meg Killingsworth</p>	<p>Contact Meg Killingsworth</p>
<p><u><i>Mentors</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Media Center</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>School Store</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Yearbook</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Gardening</i></u></p> 	<p><u><i>Donate items</i></u></p> 
<p>Come 1 time a week for one child, build a relationship</p>	<p>Shelve books/ help with checkouts, assist media specialist</p>	<p>Help kids shop and "pay"</p>	<p>Attend assigned events/ take photos</p>	<p>Weed or beautify outdoor classrooms, greenhouse, gardens</p>	<p>Classroom needs, funds for field trips, books, student needs, clothing for closet, and food for Blessings in a Backpack</p>
<p>Contact Lori Cox</p>	<p>Contact Sarah Wiggins</p>	<p>Contact Amanda Pruitt</p>	<p>Contact Cheryl Elliott</p>	<p>Contact Kathy Johnson</p>	<p>Contact Leila Fondo</p>

Special Programs, Volunteers, Parties



Share Team



Space Designated for Families



Blessings in a Backpack and Food Pantry



Social Worker Closet/ Personal Needs



Visitors at Lunch



Step 2: Teach Staff Social/ Emotional Intelligence Skills through Stories

We share stories to teach skills like building compassion and empathy, listening, less teacher talk, and being non judgemental. It's important for the staff to learn not to make assumptions and not to judge.

<https://www.smores.com/pkf27-the-connection>



Most teachers come from middle class families and may not understand families in poverty. Free poverty simulation that gets teachers thinking: <http://playspent.org>

We get permission to share our families' stories

These stories told things like why homework wasn't done or folders weren't checked, why families don't come to events, how kids are their parents' greatest joy, and challenges and perceptions toward schools in general.



How Staff Can Learn the Stories

Teach staff:

- Listen/ have conversations
- Ask questions and encourage 2 way conversations.
- Invite families in
- Don't judge
- Always be kind
- Use video messages to build trust
- Share pictures

Remember Lexie's Story

Story shared in the video above with permission from Lexie's Dad, Jon.



3 Strategies to Learn the Stories



Thank them.

Families have taken time from their busy schedules and work to come see you. By thanking them, adults will often let down their guard. *Who doesn't need to know that they are appreciated?*



Always be kind.

Homework may not be done. The folder may not be checked. A snack may never be packed. Remember there are often reasons for these issues. **Mention reminders kindly and empathize.** "I know how busy the evenings are for you with work. Is there anyone who could help you check the folder each night? Or could it be a chore for your child to empty it?"



Make it a conversation and ask questions

Families have a lot to offer on feedback and how things are going at home. **Share your data but leave time to discuss progress.** Sometimes "less is more" so that families don't leave feeling overwhelmed by so much information. It's okay to ask questions. "How are

Example of Sharing Stories with a Lesson- Faculty Meeting

Our Families Care, but Sometimes They Don't Come: Why?

1. Conflicts from work or other obligations
2. Lack of time
3. Transportation issues
4. In crisis (basic needs aren't met with food and bills)
5. Bad experiences with school growing up
6. Some feel stupid at school or have a fear of feeling stupid in the meeting
7. Some feel overwhelmed, have more than 1 child at Chestatee, or don't like crowds
8. Child is doing well so they don't feel they need this
9. This meeting isn't for "them"



Taking Away Barriers/ 3 Solutions We Can Offer

1. Ideally, we want families to come to the APTT night. But sometimes that won't work. Makeup Sessions with Meg can be a great solution to get them the data and materials to help.
 - Shorter sessions with flexible times
 - Helpful when a parent has more than 1 child at our school
 - Done individually or in small groups to ease fears
2. Church donation money can help pay for transportation or dinner if that will help get them here. Talk to Meg if that comes up.
3. Extension activities are offered for each grade level. Pump up the relationship and partnership aspects of APTT for parents who complain that they don't *need* this program.

Training Staff with a Newsletter

The Power of Videos: <https://www.smore.com/yd52z>

Get to Know Their Stories: <https://www.smore.com/pkf27>

Think Like a Parent. Talk Like a Parent: <https://www.smore.com/60rd3>

Reaching the Unreachable: <https://www.smore.com/z450v>

Communicating with Families: <https://www.smore.com/4fb1u-the-connection>



Share Your Story with the District Office and Beyond



Step 3: Share the School's Story and Happenings

If you don't tell your school's story, how will people know it?

Sharing the good builds community.

When you share successes, positives, pictures, and videos, people rally for your school.

<https://www.facebook.com/ChestateeES/>

Video Messages to Welcome

https://www.facebook.com/pg/ChestateeES/videos/?ref=page_internal
https://www.facebook.com/pg/ChestateeES/videos/?ref=page_internal



Happy Family Engagement Month

Like Comment Share

 Chestatee Elementary

29

373 Views · about 4 months ago


It's Family Engagement Month Monday! We'll be highlighting and celebrating our families all month. If you would like to share how you support your child's learning, feel free to add pictures using this link. We love to see ideas from all! <https://padlet.com/lbruce12/wezworuw4zts>



FB Friday Show: Every Friday

Chestatee Elementary
August 25 · 🌐

Meet Dr. Bearden and hear why he thinks it is important for families to be involved in their students' learning. Also, hear what to expect for our APTT nights that are just around the corner.
K-2 APTT: September 14th
3-5 APTT: September 21st



1.4K Views

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Kelli Farrington Pirkle, Angela Smithfield Blanton and 25 others like this. Chronological ▾

3 Shares

View 2 more comments

Jan Gunn Is childcare available for the Chestatee student only, or for younger siblings as well?
August 25 at 8:45am

Chestatee Elementary
September 15 at 12:49pm · 🌐

APTT Excitement: Facebook Friday Show
Join us for a discussion about APTT! Find out how last night went and more about the meeting for Grades 3-5. Special guests Tricia Brown and kids, Mrs. Stanford, Mrs. Triche, and Mrs. Dougan and her kids share the details!



Search Lisa Home Find Friends



For the Love of Chestatee: FB Friday 👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share 🌐 ⋮

Chestatee Elementary 🇺🇸❤️ 32 4 Comments

491 Views · about a week ago · 🌐

For the Love of Chestatee: FB Friday
Get to know some of our new teachers, Ms. Sumner, Ms. Hamby, and Mrs. Cox on this week's show, and find out why they LOVE Chestatee! We hope you have a nice break, and we'll see you back at school on Wednesday 2/19.

Sharing the Good with Pictures



Chestatee Elementary

Published by Lisa Chestatee [?] · February 7 at 10:11 AM · 🌐

Congratulations to our oratorical winner, Parker and 1st runner up, Bailey! Shout out to ALL the 5th students who worked so hard to prepare for this morning's oratorical contest. Thank you to our judges Kristen Glass, Darla Light and Lee Anne Rice and our amazing 5th grade teachers that made this such a fabulous event!



Chestatee Elementary

Published by Lisa Chestatee [?] · February 19 at 11:48 AM · 🌐

We celebrated students who show the 100% Accountable Mindset at our High Flyer Ceremony this morning! Thank you to our partners in education, Community Cup and Wendy's for providing treat coupons for these great students!



IT IS A POSITIVE OFFICE REFERRAL DAY!!!!

Congratulations to these students for being called to the office for a Positive Office Referral!

Students get "written up" for showing great SEAs!!

S=Strategies

E=Effort

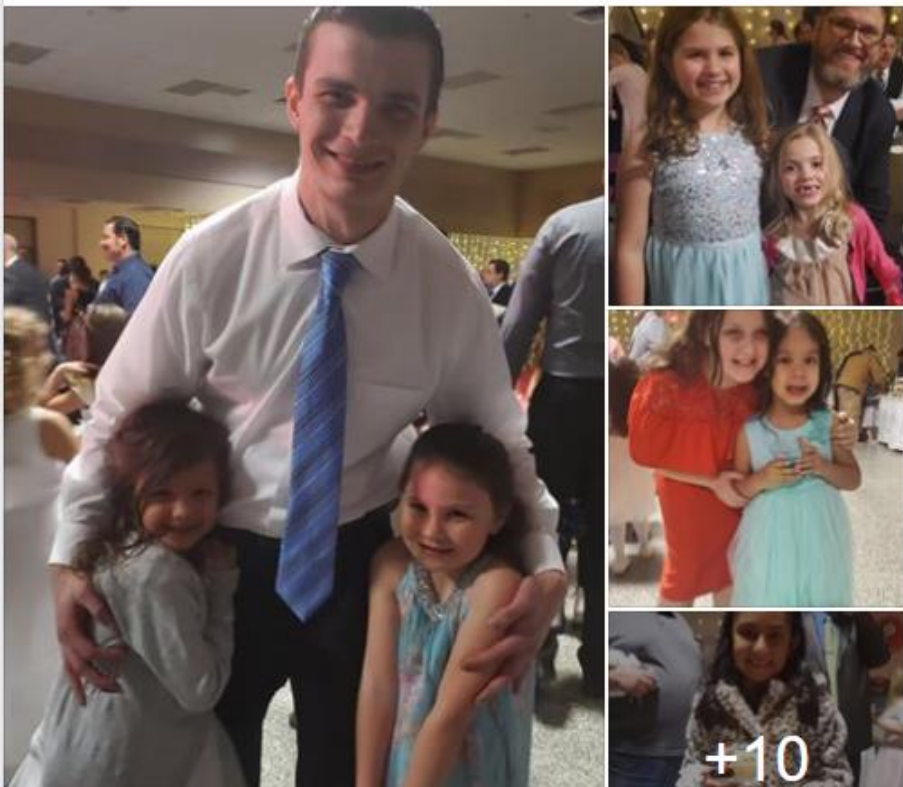
A=Attitude

Thank you for showing the SEAs and Chestatee Way!



Published by Lisa Orsattoc on February 14, 2019 11:11 AM

Thank you Chestatee PTO for a wonderful Snowflake Ball!!!



Showing Staff's Kind, Funny, Human Side



Recognizing Special Staff Members

Published by Lisa Chestatee [?] · February 4 at 10:12 AM · 🌐

We are proud to announce Leslie Butler as our Teacher of the Month for January!

Mrs. Butler teaches kindergarten at Chestatee and has taught kindergarten for 5 years. This is her 13th year teaching at Chestatee, but she has taught 18 years altogether. Mrs. Butler holds a B.S. from Southern Polytechnic State University and earned a M.Ed. from North Georgia College and State University.

Leslie and her husband, Jason, have two children and live in the Chestatee commun... [See More](#)



Chestatee Elementary

Published by Lisa Chestatee [?] · February 10 at 6:30 AM · 🌐

Would you like to show a Chestatee teacher or staff member some love in February? Use this link to help! We LOVE reading your nominations!



Teacher/Staff Member of the Month Nomination Form

PURPOSE: To recognize and celebrate the exemplary teaching and contributions by Chestatee Elementary teachers and staff. Any teacher or staff member, regardless of experience, is eligible to receive the recognition. Please fill out the following Nomination Form.

* Required

First & Last Name of Nominated Teacher *



DOCS.GOOGLE.COM

Teacher/Staff Member of the Month Nomination Form

PURPOSE: To recognize and celebrate the exemplary teaching and...

Teacher of the Year



 Chestatee Elementary

 Like  Comment  Share   

  51  7 Comments  2 Shares

678 Views · about 5 months ago · 

Teacher of the Year: FB Friday

Meet Mrs. Lori Faulkner, our Chestatee Teacher of the Year! Mrs. Faulkner is one of our ESOL teachers on the Academic Support Team. Join today's discussion to get to know her and learn more about this great lady! We are thankful to have Mrs. Faulkner at Chestatee and glad she will represent our school at the district level.

Monday's Meet and Greet: Meeting New Staff During the Summer



Chestatee Elementary

Published by Lisa Chestatee [?]

Page Liked · June 3, 2019 · 🌐

Jasmine Flores will be joining the Academic Support Team as a Title I teacher. This is her first year teaching. Jasmine student taught in second grade. She was born and raised in Gainesville, Georgia and loves to visit her family in Mexico. Her gift to teaching is her ability to connect with each individual student.

📍 Tag Photo 📍 Add Location ✎ Edit

👍❤️ 95

11 Comments

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share 🌐

Most Relevant ▾



Carmen Ansley Weaver Welcome! Looking forward to meeting you!

👍❤️ 3
Like · Reply · Message · 37w

↩️ 1 Reply



Comment as Chestatee El...



Tuesday's Team: Get to Know Our Staff Each Week



Chestatee Elementary

Published by Lisa Chestatee [?]

- September 17, 2019 · 🌐

Tuesday's Team: Meet Fourth Grade

We are the fourth grade team, and we are so excited! In fourth grade, students will have 2 teachers. One teacher will teach math and science while the other teaches language arts and social studies. We pride ourselves on getting students ready for fifth grade and middle school. You can look forward to student-led conferences this year where students will atten... See More

📍 Tag Photo 📍 Add Location ✎ Edit

👍❤️ 85

7 Comments 3 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share 🌐 📷

Most Relevant ▾



Lucy Candler Murray Y'all are awesome!!! Love sharing the hall with your team!

Like · Reply · Message · 22w



2



Comment as Chestatee El...





Chestatee Elementary

Published by Lisa Chestatee [?]

- August 27, 2019 - 🌐

Tuesday's Team: First Grade

We are first grade, and we LOVE to read! We will partner with our families to help all students become better readers. We tie many of our concepts to literature to help students improve writing skills also. This year, we will get to learn about interesting science and social studies topics such as weather, magnetism, map skills, and the economy. 3 big events that pa... [See More](#)

📍 Tag Photo 📍 Add Location ✎ Edit

👍❤️ 109

6 Comments 1 Share

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share 🌐

Most Relevant ▾



Kim Clift Jenkins I love this team!!! Miss a lot of these gorgeous faces!!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · 25w



1



Comment as Chestatee El...



Special Recognition and Awards



Special Events





Thanking Our Community



Chestatee Elementary Published by Lisa Chestatee [?] · February 6 · 🌐


A big thanks to [Causey Orthodontics](#) for sponsoring our Watch D.O.G.S. program with a donation! We appreciate our Partners in Education!

📍 Tag Photo 📍 Add Location ✎ Edit

👍❤️ 52 1 Comment 2 Shares


👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share 🌐

Most Relevant ▾

 **Taylor Warner** The Watch D.O.G.S program is huge for the "T"! Thank you for your donation!!!!

👍 1

👍 Like · Reply · Message · 2w

 Comment as Chestatee El... 🗨️ 📷 🎬 🗨️

Encouraging Partners in Education

Chestatee Elementary
Published by Lisa Chestatee [?] · January 16 at 9:37 PM · 🌐

We appreciate our partners in education! A special thanks to DJ and Dojo 400 and Mathnasium of Coal Mountain for supporting us at our 3-5 APTT Night! They'll be back next week for our K-2 families too!
www.dojodifference.com/dojo400
www.mathnasium.com/coalmountain



806 People Reached 85 Engagements **Boost Post**

806 People Reached 85 Engagements **Boost Post**

👍❤️ 13 5 Comments 1 Share

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share 🌐

Most Relevant ▾

Comment as Chestatee Elementary 😊 📷 📄 🗨️

Julia Pendergast Weart Yeah and mathnasium... haven't heard of that and since I didn't bring kiddos I didn't see it... please share!
Like · Reply · Message · 1w
↳ View 1 more reply

Chestatee Elementary Thank you for asking, Julia! We edited the post and added their website!
Like · Reply · 1w 👍 1

Most Relevant is selected, so some replies may have been filtered out.

Top Fan
Angel Dahlquist Do you have contact information for the dojo 400?
Like · Reply · Message · 1w

Chestatee Elementary Hi Angel! We edited the post and added their website. They are on FB too! Thanks for asking!
Like · Reply · 1w 👍 1

Monthly Newsletter

<https://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=260&ModuleInstanc>

March Newsletter 2020

Chestatee Elementary School

A Letter From Dr. Tennies, Our Principal

March is the time of year where it really starts to fly! We have 9 weeks left of school, and summer will be here again. Wait! What??? Where did this year go? I need it to slow down a little so that I have time to do what I need to get done!

As this month begins, we are also beginning to think about next year. At Chestatee, our families' input is key. **We have 2 special invitations for input that begin this month.**

1. Title I Planning and Input

With Title I funding, we have hundreds of thousands of extra dollars we can spend on needed resources. We always want to know where you think the money needs to go. Extra staff, special programs, technology, and family engagement are just a few of the choices. Families also have a 1% set aside from the county. This money can only be used on items families need and want to help with family engagement. Our Family Resource Room items, APTT, and resources such as childcare, translation or transportation at events also count in the set aside. By completing the Title I Planning and Input survey, you are voicing your opinion on where the money should go. **We have in person meetings planned on 3/16-3/18 and an on-line opportunity open through March 20.** We would love for you to take the time to share your thoughts.



In Conclusion

Stories are a powerful tool in increasing family engagement because knowing them creates empathy and understanding. Empathy and understanding build trust. Sharing the school's story builds community. Stories build soul! Stories ultimately improve family engagement.

- 1. Learn the stories.*
- 2. Train staff using stories.*
- 3. Share your school's story.*



Don't forget to complete the session evaluation!



**31st Annual
National Youth-At-Risk Conference**

V

Victoria Dawkins
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Presenter

K

Katherine Quinnell
Athens State University
Presenter

C

Clista Clanton
University of South Alabama
Presenter

Surveys



Session Evaluation

Photos



Be the first to share a photo!



Take a Photo

Let us know how it goes!



Contact Information

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Meg Killingsworth: mkillingsworth@forsyth.k12.ga.us

QR Code for Presentation

