

2018 Educate GA Summit

This event was hosted by State Rep. Valencia Stovall and AmbitiousX and took place on January 20-22 in the Georgia State Capitol. It was an event open to the public.

Ambitious Initiatives, Inc. (AmbitiousX) is a 501c3 social impact organization leading community transformation and supporting middle and high school students with civic and educational empowerment. The organization was started by three sisters from southeast Atlanta in 1998 when they formed Sisters In Action, Inc. hoping for a large-scale community transformation by intersecting (X) high-quality public education, with increased access to economic opportunity and developing leaders.

Educate Georgia Summit is a project AmbitiousX took over, continuing a tradition started in 2015, where parents, students, business and community leaders were all welcomed. The purpose of this summit is to bring people together, to educate, to encourage discussions that can fix the so obvious cracks in the educational system.

Breakfast and lunch was served in a tent next to the capitol building and I am mentioning this because it was such a great occasion to network, to meet possible employers or people who affected education in Georgia in a positive way. I was happy to meet Mrs. Antoinette Tuff, who on Jan 31, 2014 prevented a mass shooting at an elementary school last year by calming down a mentally ill gunman. Her inspirational story is found in the book Prepared for a Purpose, where Tuff & Tresniowski (2014) tell us not only about how Antoinette showed grace to a gunman and prevented a tragedy but also the story of hope of a woman who faced herself pain, hurt and rejection by an unjust society.

The event covered interactive maker studios, live talks with thought leaders and engaging sessions. The participants were randomly assembled in groups of 12 to facilitate discussions and networking. The Capitol building was impressive and full of art. The participants had the opportunity to visit with ease during breaks. My group of twelve consisted of eleven females and one male. One of us was a student in secondary level in Atlanta, two of us were pre-service teachers, and the rest were veteran teacher. I already knew the other pre-service teacher, while she is in two of the three classes I took 2017-2018 at GSU. I instantly connected with two other participants one an English teacher who moved to Atlanta from Florida and the other a Special Education teacher serving Metro Atlanta Area. They were interested to hear about the other educational systems I had experienced before I moved to USA, Germany, and Romania, that have major differences. I was very interested in networking with them and find out how can I connect with my students and what other suggestions they can make for my future adventure.

One of the most interesting maker studios I attended was ESSENTIAL SKILLS, led by Monique Nunnally. We were grouped in 4 and asked to play a game of Life and impersonating different scenarios that were inspired by real-life stories of African American students in Metro Atlanta Area. An example of such story is that one of a White Social Study teacher that was not acknowledging the Black culture and an African American student said she would not do her work until the teacher will not acknowledge her culture. She was in danger to fail the class. We, in our group of 4 had to come with ideas of what kind of skills should the student have to be able to deal with the teacher. As Kendziora & Yoder (2016) said, students, need more than just academic knowledge to succeed in college, careers, and personal and public life. They need to understand their skills and abilities, manage their emotions and behavior, communicate effectively, negotiate conflict, care about others, and make responsible decisions.

A good initiative to help students develop social skills is the implementation of SEL (Social Emotional Learning) in schools. It was proven to be effective only when families and communities are involved (Greenberg et al., 2017). SEL is implemented in other states and internationally as well, but to be effective, it needs to be supported at federal and state level and to be in concordance with classroom management and instructions, and school's policies and climate.

An engaging session and a topic I didn't know anything before was THE TRUE COST OF EDUCATION: THE HISTORY OF QUALITATIVE BASIC EDUCATION ACT. Georgia adopted the Quality Basic Education Act in n 1985. The Quality Basic Education Act requires local school systems to provide all public-school officials and personnel the opportunity to continue their development throughout their professional careers. This was a very serious topic that was lighted up by the activities we were invited to do. I found out that "P-12 Per-pupil expenditure: \$9,013.36" (Larkin, 2017) and where the money came from: state, Georgia's education tax credit programs, lottery, and how money was distributed among schools and departments.

This event was well organized, educational, enjoyable, and the only thing I would change is that I would somehow make sure to advertise it more to the parents and students, while the overwhelming majority of the participants were teachers.

References:

Tuff, A., & Tresniowski, A. (2014). *Prepared for a purpose: The inspiring true story of how one woman saved an Atlanta school under siege*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group.

Monica Cooper
Community Action

Georgia State Dept. of Education, A. (1988). Staff Development Programs in Georgia under
Quality Basic Education.

Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., Weissberg, R. R., & Durlak, J. A. (2017). Social and
Emotional Learning as a Public Health Approach to Education. *Future Of Children*,
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Kenziora, K., Yoder, N., & Education Policy Center at American Institutes for, R. (2016).
When Districts Support and Integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Findings
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Proof of attendance:

Order for 2018 Educate GA Summit

Free order #718107199 on January 16, 2018
Saturday, January 20, 2018 at 8:00 AM –
Monday, January 22, 2018 at 3:00 PM (EST)
Atlanta GA

[CONTACT THE ORGANIZER](#)

General Admission

[Edit](#)

Contact Information

monica

cooper

mcooper39@student.gsu.edu

[View complete attendee info](#)

