

Educational System in Georgia gets an F - Places - Rants - Geek-Rant

Written by The Geek

Wednesday, 05 October 2011 15:46

So recently I moved my whole family from sunny South Florida, to beautiful Georgia. I did all the required homework up front, or so I thought. Checked neighborhood, schools, crime rates, weather, and all sorts of other comparisons I could find, before deciding on an area and putting an offer on a house. Once we moved into our new house, I was then told by the schools that my daughter cannot attend. Yes, the local public school flat out denied my child.

I'm a single dad with a handful of children. The buying process for a house isn't the fastest thing, so when the actual purchase of the house rolled into the beginning of the school year, I went ahead and had my children start school in South Florida, with the knowledge that we would be moving sometime in the first month of school. This seemed like the best option.

Now my oldest daughter is a senior. She had some issues last year, which resulted in her failing a couple of her classes. But according to the state of Florida, even with those failures, she only needs 5 credits to graduate. When I went to the school counselors at the end of the last school year to see about summer or virtual school, they told me she only needed 5 credits and she could do them all this year.

So here we are a year later. We move up to Cherokee County, just north of Atlanta in GA. I have all of the kids transcripts and withdrawal papers, and after getting our stuff delivered, I take the kids to school to register. At this point school in FL had only been in for 4 weeks, and my kids had missed the last 4 days due to the move.

Well, the trip to the high school was less than stellar. The counselor for my daughter, Catherine Holman, met me at the front desk where I was with my children. She asked my oldest how old she was, and her smile immediately became a frown (my oldest just turned 18). She said, out loud, I'm probably not keeping her and went about talking to my other high schoolers. In my head, I'm thinking "what does she mean not taking her?"

I'll cut through a lot of the fluff here, as there is plenty. First Ms. Holman suggested that my oldest could get her GED. At my obvious scowl at that remark, she then says that she can attend Night School to get her credits and diploma. In any case, I had other schools to visit and had to get to work, so we finished up and left. But the more I thought about what she said, the more confused I got, so I made an appt to go in and sit with her for a more in-depth discussion.

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So here's the scoop. First, apparently the GA schools have a much more rigid curriculum than we had in FL. All the "required" classes are taken at the appropriate time, in the appropriate grade. Everyone in Algebra is in 9th grade, etc. My daughter did not fit this pattern. Also, in FL she had taken Fundamentals of Algebra, and then Algebra, which had counted as 2 credits. Here in GA, that is only 1 credit as both classes are considered Algebra. So she moved from needing 5 credits to graduate to 7.5 credits. Fine, let her take virtual classes at home in order to make up the credits. Nope.

Yeah, there's more. First, apparently GA started school nearly a full month earlier than FL. So 4 weeks of school in FL is nearly to the end of the first quarter here. Ok, well people move all the time, I'm sure this happens occasionally. Second, she MUST take english 11 before she is allowed to take english 12. Ok, speedbump. But can she take 11 now, and then take 12 online? No. And why not? Because, here in Cherokee County (maybe all of GA, I'm not sure), they have something called the Senior project. It is a year-long project that the kids work on, that builds upon itself the whole year. Since we're over 8 weeks into the school year, there is no way my daughter will have the seat time required to finish the project.

Ok, so the main truth comes out. No senior can transfer into a GA school during their senior year (well, after the first couple of weeks) and expect to attend school at a regular high school. Yes, the public school turns away seniors because there is NO WAY they can possibly do the project. Nor do they want to take a student who is already 18.

Forget our other issues. The main issue boils down to the senior project. So I asked the counselor, how does any senior from anywhere transfer into this school district once the school year begins. "They can't". That's it, end of story.

I've tried many other venues. Georgia Virtual Schools would take my daughter and give her all the classes she needs to graduate on-time with her class this year. But since they are not an educational institution, they do not issue diplomas directly. My daughter would need to sign up with a school (in this case, Etowah high school) as a student JUST so the Virtual School system had a school to send the required information to. Nope, the schools in our District are not yet affiliated with the state-run Virtual School system.

So here we are now. My daughter is forced to attend night school 4 days a week from 4 until

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10pm. She cannot earn all of her required credits until DECEMBER of next year, which means her graduation ceremony will be a year after it should. The night school imposes a hardship on our family. We're a single parent, single-car family. So I have to leave every day during my WORKING hours to drive her to school. She isn't here with us for dinner (she's a terrific cook, too), and I have to go get her again at 10pm. If she is late or misses 3 classes in a semester, then she is kicked out and loses the whole semester. Fun stuff.

So if you're planning on relocating to GA and have kids in high school, make SURE to do it during the summer, or the public schools may turn away your kids.

I'm not done. I may have to deal with where she is, but I tell you as a hard-working taxpayer this whole scenario is complete unacceptable. My child has every right to attend public school along with her peers. And people move! For jobs, for family, for many reasons. That's WHY we have transcripts for children to move from one place to another. I plan on contacting the local school board, the school superintendant, and right on up the line to whomever I can to bring this issue into the light where it belongs. A child who wants to learn being turned away from public school, with no GOOD reason.

And I thought the schools would be better here.