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State School Superintendent visits Marion Co.

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BUENA VISTA — On Tuesday, Marion County Schools hosted Superintendent of Georgia Schools, John Barge at the site of the new Marion County Middle/ High School. Barge was greeted by Richard R. McCorkle, superintendent of Marion County Schools, and other local dignitaries as well as student representatives. Marion County High School cheerleaders and marching band also welcomed Barge, who arrived by helicopter around 1 p.m. He addressed the students briefly, telling them that “education is the great equalizer,” before beginning a tour of the new school.

“Last week I found myself at a press conference with the President of the United States in the East Room of the White House,” Barge began from behind a podium, adorned with the Marion County Schools logo.

Barge, addressing the students, said that he, the youngest of five kids, never expected to be in such lofty company.

“My dad was a severe alcoholic; we were extremely poor, and things were not good at my house,” he said. Barge’s unfortunate home life motivated him to enjoy school and early on he found it to be an important key to happiness and success.

“I loved school because I could get away from home, and at school I had teachers that cared about me,” he said.

School was a safe haven that instilled in him a yearning to make a better life for himself as an adult.

“The only way I knew to do that was to get an education,” he explained.

For college, Barge said he knew he would have to get a scholarship because there was no money for tuition. This motivated him to do well and make good grades.

Focusing on a group of students from L.K. Moss Primary School, Barge said, “I encourage you right now to make decisions that will impact the rest of your life.”

He conveyed the meaning of the apposition “education is the great equalizer” with a simple directive to the students. “You have the same opportunity as any child in this school and to do something with it,” he said.

In addressing the older students from the Marion County Marching Band, Barge referenced former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. “Sometimes we ask ourselves ‘who am I to be beautiful, who am I to be strong?’”

“You know what he said,” Barge asked.

“Who are you not to be?”

In closing, Barge said that one of his greatest personal motivators has been other people telling that he couldn’t do something. Providing an example, Barge explained that he was the first in his family to attend college. He was not expected by some people to be successful and he had “a lot to live down” in high school because of the circumstances of his family life.

“You are writing your own stories,” Barge said.

“Be bold, be courageous and write your own stories.”