

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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June 24, 2011

Dear Chamber Members:

After decades of debate, our community is close to having the opportunity to exercise our right to vote on school unification. The petition drive by the Community Unification for Educational Excellence (CUEE) is moving one step closer to meeting its goal of placing the school unification issue on the November 8, 2011 general election ballot.

The Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce supports this effort and encourages all eligible Chamber members to sign the petition and to give your employees who are Valdosta residents the opportunity to sign the petition.

Your signature is not a vote for or against unification; it is simply a statement that you believe the people should vote.

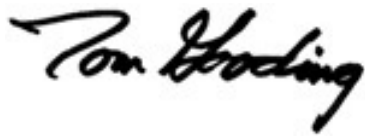
Here are five reasons why the Chamber supports school unification and believes Valdosta residents should sign the petition:

1. We've debated the issue long enough. It's time to have a public dialogue about this issue and how we can better educate all children in our community. Signing the petition will ensure our community has this discussion and gets a chance, once and for all, to vote on the issue.
2. We need graduates with better skills. According to the latest testing data from the Georgia Department of Education, many of our students simply aren't measuring up.
(<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&CountyId=792&T=1&FY=2010>)
3. Successful economic development depends on a workforce that is educated, motivated and prepared to work. Research shows that the more intensely we focus instruction and resources on teaching our students, the better the results. Unification, by its very nature, supports such a focus.
4. It's time for our community to unite behind one vision – a vision of having a single school system with a single focus that will ensure all children are performing at higher levels.
5. A unified school system will give our community a unique opportunity to rethink, in a holistic way, what is best for raising the academic performance of our children, especially those who are either failing or struggling to meet even the minimum academic standards set by the state.

A healthy debate and a vote on unification is the right decision for Valdosta and Lowndes County. As a member of the Chamber, I encourage you to sign the petition, regardless of your views on the school unification issue.

CUEE will be collecting signatures from Valdosta registered voters until Monday, July 11. If you have not signed the petition, please come by the CUEE office today at 217 N. Ashley Street and sign the petition. I also encourage you to call Molly Stevenson at (229) 242-7669 or contact her at mstevenson@cueeinc.com to arrange a time when a CUEE representative can bring a petition to your business for your signature and other employees at your worksite who wish to sign the petition.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Gooding". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Gooding

Chairman of the Board

Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce