

MAY CT PTSA NEWSLETTER

Www.ctpta.org

connecticut.pta@snet.net

Can We All Get Along?

If you have schools that are merging or your are reconfiguring your building structure, closing and reorganizing buildings can be very stressful experience. The uncertainty of the unknown can be daunting.

Questions that you might have are: Will my child be safe it not his/her friends? Will things be done differently in a new building? Will things be done differently in a new building? Will the staff have job security? Will my child know the teachers? Who should be included on the decision-making team? How can my PTA help calm parents fears? How can PTA help make it a smooth transition? What does our PTA need to do if our school is closing or changing?

The most important thing to consider is **WHAT BENEFITS THE CHILDREN**. You will find that children do just fine. It is usually the parents that don't fair as well.

Can we all just get along? **ABSOLUTELY!**



**LEADERSHIP FREE TRAINING
SATURDAY, JULY 30TH
LOCATION TBA**

**CT PTSA
60 CONNOLLY PARKWAY
BUILDING 12, SUITE 103
HAMDEN, CT 06514
203-281-6617**

REGIONAL PRESIDENT AND TREASURER TRAINING

The State Office has set up FREE Training for all of our incoming Unit Presidents and Treasurers:
Come to any training in any area we are hosting!

Region 4 Area:

Hosted by: Ridgefield PTA Council

Date: Tuesday, June 14th

Time: 9:30AM

Location: Ridgefield Town Hall Annex, 70 Prospect Street, Ridgefield
(Between Vanity Gym and the Board of Education Offices)

Region 1 Area:

Hosted by: Manchester PTA Council

Date: Monday, June 20th

Time 6:30PM

Location: Illing Middle School, 227 Middle Turnpike East, Manchester

Region 3 Area:

Hosted by : Hamden PTA Council

Date: Saturday, August 13th

Time:

9:30AM

Location: Hamden Middle School, Dixwell Avenue, Hamden

To register, email connecticut.pta@snet.net or visit our website at www.ctpta.org

Big Cash! Awesome Kids! Transitioning Officers!

Don't miss out on the chance to win big cash for your PTA

On April 18th, Rite Aid launched the Rite Aid wellness+ Points for PTAs Contest* in conjunction with Just Between Friends. Haven't signed your PTA up yet? You're missing out on the opportunity to win cash prizes for parent's wellness+ card purchases.

The Rite Aid wellness+ Points for PTAs Contest is a simple concept. Sign up your PTA for the program by clicking on the "Join Programs" link of the Administrator Dashboard "Earn Cash" widget. Then a link will appear on the household start pages of parents in your school community. Parents just click on the link to enter their wellness+ card number. During the contest period, when those parents use their wellness+ card for purchases at Rite Aid, points will be assigned to your PTA.

We make it easy for you to get parents involved in the contest. When you register your unit, you'll have access to these PDF assets to help you promote the program to parents in your school:

A "How-to" Guide that outlines steps to encourage parent participation

3 different email templates for you to send to parents motivating them to participate

A flyer that can be printed and hung up in common areas of the school or sent home with students to generate awareness of the contest and motivate parent participation

The Rite Aid wellness+ Points for PTAs Contest runs from April 18th until June 18th. The PTAs with the most points win cash prizes – 10 prizes will be awarded! The Grand Prize is \$2,000. Imagine what your PTA could do with that money. The 1st prize is \$1,000. Two 2nd prizes of \$500 will be awarded. Two 3rd prizes of \$250 and four 4th prizes of \$100 will also be awarded.

Give parents time to earn points for your PTA by signing your unit up for this program today!

. For Official Rules, visit <http://www.justbetweenfriends.com>.





Parents: A Key to Raising Student Achievement in YOUR District

by Robert Rader, Executive Director, CABE

On March 26th, the State Department of Education's Health/Nutrition Family Services and Adult Education (can you tell they have combined some bureaus?) held an "engagement" forum, aimed at bringing schools, families and communities together. Despite it being a Saturday, there were about 300 people in the audience, mainly parents.

As part of what CABE is doing to help train school governance councils, Patrice McCarthy, Lisa Steimer, Bob King and I attended. We heard from Dr. James Comer, from the Yale Child Study, who was the 2004 CABE Friend of Education Award winner, who talked about the importance of building a larger cadre of people who truly understand how children learn and develop. By better incorporating what he has written so comprehensively about, children will learn more, schools will be transformed and achievement gaps can be eliminated.

He also addressed the importance of getting school processes right and said that our kids will not be able to make their dreams come true unless adults focus on the right things. He also stated that the most important part of child development in the schools is the "social interaction". And, he did not limit this interaction to students and other students; the relationship between the adults and the students also is critical. He spoke about the importance of eliciting genuine positive responses from students as a means of testing whether a teacher or a parent are making progress.

There also was a discussion late in the day on school governance councils, which included Dr. Penny Bender Sebring, the Senior Research Associate at the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago. She stated that these councils had been in place for approximately 30 years and that their authority was stronger than that in Connecticut. She said that 60 percent were operating well, 25 percent did "some things well and some not so well" and that 10-15% were subject to corruption, nepotism or high levels of conflict.

All of this led me to believe that if school governance councils are going to be effective, it is critical that each council's school board take a positive and active role in ensuring that the councils are well-trained (and CABE is helping to do that), that their roles and responsibilities are well-defined and that resources are made available to these councils so that they can carry out their advisory functions in an ethical, collaborative way that leads to helpful, thought-out recommendations.

If this doesn't happen, we are likely to see too many councils fall into Dr. Sebring's 10-15 percent.

I believe that parent power is becoming a stronger and more crucial part of what can make our schools more successful. It is true that school governance councils add a layer to the organizational

charts in school districts. But, if they operate in the manner they were intended to operate, they can be a key tool in increasing student achievement.

When I talk to parents and councils, one of the things I tell them is that their responsibility is not only in helping change the school climate, but also going back to their “constituents” and explaining to them their role in making sure that their children make the best of the school opportunities that they are given.

As an example, councils, especially the parent members, should help the other parents in the community understand that they should be asking their children what they are learning in school, whether they have done their homework and, especially in the middle and higher grades, why they didn’t attend school some days.

These councils grew out of the frustration, especially in the inner cities, about the achievement gap. And, the Legislature required underperforming schools to establish the councils mainly because of the push by the State of Black Connecticut to move the “ball” forward.

Gwen Samuel, from the State of Black Connecticut, also is working with other parents, foundation money and other resources, to build a ‘parents’ union’. It will not be a collective bargaining union in the traditional sense, but more of an association, with chapters in school districts throughout the State.

It will concentrate on providing training to parents and others on many issues that affect student learning, their schools and their school districts. It will be based on collaboration because, as Gwen has said, that is the model that will best enable all of the parties to work together and understand each other’s concerns. And, the nascent organization is looking for all parents---urban, suburban and rural, as well as diverse parents in terms of economic, racial and ethnic diversity.

The statewide PTSA (the “S” is for Students) is also looking to become more of a player in these issues. They were represented at SDE’s meeting and Executive Director Sally Boske (also a school board member in Middletown), and Vice President **for Membership and Convention Don Romoser** also serve with CAFE and others on the Advisory Committee for the school governance councils.

This is an important time for parents, school boards and superintendents to think about how best they can work together. Parents can be a tremendously positive force in your district; they also can be disruptive and sometimes unresponsive (especially when teachers call with a problem involved one of their children).

We know that involved, positive parents, who have moved up the ladder at their local PTA or PTO, and now I expect, have served on their school governance councils, can be terrific board members. The training and hands-on understanding of how schools work can enable them to join their boards with a running start.

Failing to take the growing, more-unified power of parents into consideration as you think about strengthening your schools would be a mistake. Engaging them can help you turn around a poorly performing school or make a good or great school even better!

McKinley School Students Winners in State 'Reflections' Competition

Erin Charlotte Harrington and Audrey Lansing Burns Win First and Second Place in Different Categories of Cultural Arts Competition
May 21, 2011



Erin Charlotte Harrington, left, and Audrey Lansing Burns

Credit Contributed

Editor's note: The following news release was received from Deborah Burns of Burns Communications, LLC in Fairfield's Southport neighborhood.

Erin Charlotte Harrington and Audrey Lansing Burns, both Fairfield residents and McKinley School 4th graders, were recognized Thursday night at the Connecticut Parent Teacher Student Association's annual 2010-2011 Reflections Program "Together We Can" awards ceremony and reception held at Hamden Middle School.

Erin won first place for her video composition and Audrey won second place for her music composition. Harrington's entry also won recognition at the national level. Master of Ceremonies Sarah Beier, State Reflections chair, and Marne Usher, State Reflections president, recognized the winners with medals for first-place winners and certificates for all other winners.

"We are sincerely honored that Erin and Audrey's talents have been recognized, and warm congratulations to all of the winners throughout the state," said Ginger Vail, principal of McKinley School. "Their win is also a reflection on the quality of the curriculum offered at McKinley School."

The Connecticut PTSA, through the National PTA, hosts the Reflections annual cultural arts program to encourage children from preschool through grade 12 to create and submit works of art and receive positive recognition for their artistic efforts in six areas: Literature; Visual Arts (which includes art forms such as drawing, painting, print making, and collage); Photography; Dance Choreography; and Film/Video and Musical Composition.

The Reflections Program allows PTAs throughout the state to recognize children for their creativity in portraying yearly themes.

For nearly 40 years, The Reflections Program has encouraged millions of students across the nation and in American schools overseas to create works of art. The Reflections Program was started in 1969 by then Colorado PTA President, Mary Lou Anderson. Students participate in the Reflections Program by submitting entries to their local PTA or PTSA. Any PTA/PTSA in good standing is eligible to sponsor a Reflections Program.

Submitted by Deborah Burns of Burns Communications, LLC

Connecticut National Reflection Winners

The CT PTSA State office is proud to announce in addition to our State Winners we have 6 NATIONAL Winners!! A job well done by all!

The following students were National Winners:

AWARD OF EXCELLANCE: \$200.00 cash award, silver plated Reflections Medallion, A certificate and letter signed by the National PTA president and Recognition in the annual PTA Reflections online gallery

JULIA SALINGER

SENIOR
LITERATURE

TERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
PLYMOUTH

NATALIE STEELE

PRIMARY
MUSICAL COMP

NORTH STRATFIELD PTA
FAIRFIELD

AWARD OF MERIT: : A silver plated Reflections Medallion, A certificate and letter signed by the National PTA president and Recognition in the annual PTA Reflections online gallery

APRIL COOKE

MIDDLE/JUNIOR
PHOTOGRAPHY

TOMLINSON MIDDLE SCHOOL PTA
FAIRFIELD

JAMIE MERCADO

SENIOR
PHOTOGRAPHY

FAIRFIELD WARDE HIGH PTA
FAIRFIELD

GIANNA FORTE

MIDDLE JUNIOR
DANCE

EASTON PTA
EASTON

OLIVIA BELLIVEAU

MIDDLE/JUNIOR
LITERATURE

WOOSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL
STRATFORD

**DON'T FORGET NEXT YEAR! THEME IS
“DIVERSITY MEANS”**

SEPTA Long Overdue in East Haddam

The local chapter of the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) held its first meeting in Moodus earlier this week. Parents and teachers of special needs children came to learn what they can do to help their children in school. Parents who attended the meeting said they were pleased to be having their first meeting with Melissa Johnson, the chairperson of SEPTA. "SEPTA is about helping parents become better advocates" for their children, Johnson said. SEPTA is an off-shoot of the national Parent Teacher Association. Unfortunately, only 15 states have SEPTA's. Though Connecticut's chapter of the group has been around for 20 years, many parents locally had not heard of it before this meeting.

The gathering on Wednesday night came about because Susan Waide, a parent with a special needs child, decided it was time for her town to have a SEPTA. She found out about the organization and took action.

"I thought, 'that's a good idea, we should have one for our school,' " Waide said. She said she wishes she had known about the group when her child was younger. "I don't want parents to go through what I had to go through."

Waide emailed the national PTA and got in touch with Johnson. Johnson asked when she wanted the first meeting and Waide said "as soon as possible." Only two weeks went by until Wednesday's meeting.

Johnson discussed the importance of better planning in classrooms for activities for special needs children. For example, a bowling party with quieter music and no strobe lights or disco balls to distract the kids, Johnson said.

Johnson started a SEPTA in her own town because of her own children's special needs. She was frustrated because her children had trouble joining in on many of the normal school activities and field trips.

"I thought, my kids are not going to all these activities and it doesn't make sense to me," Johnson said.

Johnson had a helpful suggestion to these parents called Life Mapping. This is something Johnson did for her children when they were young. Life Mapping helps parents figure out where a special needs child will go when they get older.

"Do you see them having a wife, a family...will they work?" Johnson said these were the questions she had to figure out.

The meeting gave parents the chance to discuss all these issues and more, from the daily life of children and parents to what it's like taking vacations with their children. Parents expressed that more needs to be done between parents and teachers, to help better address the needs of special education students.



National PTA Official Back to School Kit—Register Today

Attention UNIT AND COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

THE OFFICIAL BACK TO SCHOOL KIT contains the PTA Quick-Reference Guides, membership posters, male involvement materials, program and advocacy resources and special offers from national partners– the tools your units need for a successful PTA year..

Make sure your PTAs get these valuable resources. Remind them to register to receive their free 2011-2012 kit.

All local, council , district and regional PTAs must register to receive their kit for 2011-2012. The kit registration form is at PTA.org/OfficialKit. The incoming 2011-2012 PTA president will need to specify the units preferred shipping address and date.

Help us spread the word to units about the need to register. Each unit will receive only one free kit. Kits will ship weekly based on unit orders beginning June 17 and running through September 16.

If you have any questions, please email National PA at info_@pta.org

**PTA PRESIDENTS—
QUICK REFERENCE GUIDES INSIDE VERY KIT FOR
YOU TO SHARE WITH YOUR EXECUTIVE BOARD!**

CT PTSA

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PTA TREASURERS/PRESIDENTS
DON'T FORGET IF YOU ARE THE
OUTGOING TREASURER —YOU
HAVE TO COMPLETE THE 990 FOR
YOUR SCHOOL YEAR . IT SHOULD
BE THE LAST RECORD OF BUSINESS
BEFORE MOVING ON
AS TREASURER!



115th Annual National PTA Convention and
Exhibition June 9-12, 2011

Disney Coronado Resort and Convention
Center, Orlando, Florida

Visit

www.pta.org/annualconvention