

Fairfax County Council of PTAs



NEWSLETTER

November 2004

www.fccpta.org

VOLUNTEERS

The subject for this month is volunteers. One of the stated goals of the Fairfax County Council of PTAs is to promote positive relationships between parents and schools. One meaningful way to do that is to encourage more parents to volunteer. It is important that your PTA share with parents the variety of ways that they can give of their time.

Volunteer work is serious business, but we need to make it interesting and not dry and boring. A volunteer needs to be engaged not only with their minds but also with their hearts. If you make volunteer work experiences memorable, you will keep them coming back.

After developing your volunteer program and finding out from teachers and administrators what opportunities there are, you need to get the information out to your school community in the a variety of ways. Use the school website. Send out a survey at the beginning of the year and again after the first semester. Network—contact family, friends, neighbors. Use bulletin boards at public facilities—the grocery store, the local swimming pool, the community center, and handouts at special events— School Orientation, Back to School Night, Parent Programs, Class Coffees. Your Volunteer pool should reflect your schools' ethnic population, gender population, and geographic population. You need to have your dads, and grandparents involved as well as the moms. It is important to have all the neighborhoods that feed into your school and your school business partner involved in the volunteer life of your school. Be sure that the adults in your community know that they can volunteer for a day or an hour, on a weekly basis or just for special events. Find out what special talents are out there that your school can take advantage of. Volunteering benefits so many people in so many ways.

There are benefits for the students like enriched learning experiences, additional personalized attention and positive adult role models. The benefits for the school

include additional services without extra cost, improved student achievement, and positive public relations and community attitude toward the educational system. The benefits for the community are a more responsive school system, added pride and confidence in our educational system and better educated students. Last but certainly not least, the benefits for the volunteer include sharing knowledge and talents, knowing that you are needed and wanted, and becoming more involved in the school and community. A win-win situation. Although volunteers are not generally doing it for the recognition, it is important to show your appreciation and there are many ways to do that. Your school can hold a volunteer tea or luncheon to thank all who have contributed their time in some way. You can nominate a person who has contributed in an extraordinary way to be the "Volunteer of the Year." Those nominations are sent to the District where nominees are recognized at the Annual Meeting in April. The District winner is then forwarded to the State PTA where a winner is chosen and recognized at the State PTA convention in November.

Last but not least, thank you. I realize my audience is made up of PTA leaders who are already giving a lot of time and energy to their local units. I hope you know what a difference you make to all of the children in your school. You touch many lives without even realizing it sometimes.

Rest assured, on those days when an activity isn't going well or you're just too tired to go on and wondering why you are doing all this work, it IS worth it. It DOES make a difference. And please, don't ever feel you're alone. There are so many resources available from the County, District, State and National PTA. For assistance with volunteer issues or anything PTA check the websites or contact me directly. Remember, it's all for the kids.

Lynn Terhar, FCCPTA 2004-2006 President

Of Local Interest

Newsletter Correction — Emergency Plans / Evacuation Sites

In the October FCCPTA newsletter, I erroneously suggested in my front page letter that parents should ask their school principals about their emergency plans and specifically about evacuation sites.

According to Fred Ellis, Director of the FCPS Office of Safety and Security, parents are encouraged to ask principals questions such as:

- Does the school have a plan?
- When was it last updated?
- Has staff been trained on what to do in the event of various types of emergencies?

But, specific information about evacuation sites will not be shared with the public for two important reasons. First, depending on the type and scope of the emergency, there might be several options for evacuation sites. Second, publicizing the evacuation sites might make them targets as well, and therefore not a safe option for students. Mr. Ellis has assured me, however, that in the event of any emergency that requires evacuation of students from their school building, they will use every appropriate means to disseminate information about where parents can expect to be reunited with their children, such as the Keep In Touch e-mail system, phone trees, and media outlets when appropriate.

So please feel free to contact your principal for reassurance that plans are in place, but understand that some of the details cannot be shared.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions about this.

Lynn Terhar

President, FCCPTA
fccpta@cox.net ... home: 703-968-6949

PTA MISSION

- To support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children;
- To assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children;
- To encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

President's Checklist for:

NOVEMBER

- Attend Virginia PTA's Convention on Nov 19-21.
- Remind your Treasurer that all dues must be sent to the State Office by December 1 so your Local Unit remains in "Good Standing."
- See that your Reflections program is on track to meet due dates.

DECEMBER

- Enjoy the holidays and rejuvenate yourself for the remainder of the year.

JANUARY

- Make reservations for Virginia PTA's sponsored PTA Day at the General Assembly.
- Advertise the need for members to serve on the Nominating Committee.

Project Graduation Web Site

Memo from: Jo Lynne DeMary
Superintendent of Public Instruction

As we begin the 2004-2005 school year, I want to remind you of the Project Graduation Website. On this Web site are opportunities and resources that are available to assist you and the students of the graduating class of 2005 who have not met the requirements for one of the diplomas.

The Web site address is:

[http://www.pen.k12.va.us/
2plus4in2004/index.shtml](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/2plus4in2004/index.shtml)



Thanks for the Updates

We would like to thank all the PTA/PTSAs of Fairfax County for submitting their updated information to the FCCPTA. It is important that we keep accurate information in our secure database so that we can get important PTA and legislative information to right people.

If you have any further updates, go to the FCCPTA website (www.fccpta.org) and go to the Contact Info page.

Thanks!

Fairfax County Council of PTAs Remarks at the Virginia BOE Public Hearing on SOQ revision

October 14, 2004

The Fairfax County Council of PTAs respectfully submits the following suggestions regarding the proposed revisions to the Standards of Quality:

I. Standard 6, Planning and Public Involvement:

We emphatically endorse the remarks made tonight by the Virginia PTA president, Ramona Morrow. The Building Successful Partnerships program that we already have in place is an effective tool that should be part of every comprehensive long-range plan. We have several experienced presenters right here in Fairfax County, as well as many others around the state who are trained and ready to implement this aspect of the plan.

We also strongly support the inclusion of specific language that requires participation of parents in the development of a division-wide long-range plan. Parental participation in developing the division-wide long-range plan means that these primary stakeholders will take real ownership and encourage more active participation in all levels of the school system.

II. Standard 2, Instructional Administrative and Support Personnel:

The Fairfax County Council of PTAs supports language that would set division-wide or school-wide ratios of students to teachers to actual class size maximums. Parents consistently express concerns about large class sizes and there is specific anecdotal evidence that although divisions and schools are complying with required ratios, there are individual classrooms with 33, 35 and even 40 students in the class.

III. Standard 5, Teacher Quality:

The Fairfax County Council of PTAs strongly supports the proposed revisions that address school boards to provide high quality professional development in instructional content each year, that requires ALL instructional personnel to participate in these programs, and that requires an annual review of those professional development programs for quality, effectiveness, and relevancy. Further, we would encourage you to include high quality professional development for paraprofessionals and other education support professionals who play a key role in the education process.

IV. Standard 3, Accreditation, other standards and evaluation:

The Fairfax County Council of PTAs supports the inclusion of industry certification exams to assess the educational progress of students.

Professional Technical Studies is an important component of the broad based education that is provided by Fairfax County Public Schools. Many of the courses offered don't fall into "traditional" high school class models and students can only be fairly evaluated by tracking their progress toward passing these certification exams.

Update Bylaws

According to the State PTA office, the following schools have bylaws which have expired or will expire before the end of the year. The date listed is the date they were last approved. They expire five years from that date.

If you have any questions, please contact Fairfax District Director, Bill Levey at fairfaxDD@vapta.org or the state office at 1-866-4VAKIDS.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Brookfield Elem. PTA | 11/30/1999 |
| Bucknell Elem. PTA | 11/16/1999 |
| Cardinal Forest Elem. PTA | 11/29/1999 |
| Crestwood Elem. PTA | 10/10/1999 |
| A Scott Crossfield Elem PTA | 10/27/1999 |
| Forestdale Elementary PTA | 9/2/1999 |
| Graham Road Elem PTA | 7/6/1990 |
| Great Falls Elem PTA | 7/10/1999 |
| Luther Jackson Middle PTA | 9/1/1999 |
| Key Center PTA | 12/31/1998 |
| Robert E. Lee High PTSA | 7/30/1999 |
| Lynbrook Elem. PTA | 10/19/1999 |
| Mantua Elem.pta | 8/6/1999 |
| Mosby Woods Elementary PTA | 9/10/1998 |
| Mt. Vernon Woods Elem. PTA | 10/2/1995 |
| Navy Elem. PTA 520 | 3/9/1999 |
| Newington Forest Elem. PTA | 11/30/1999 |
| Sleepy Hollow Elem. PTA | 10/7/1999 |
| Mark Twain Middle PTA | 6/1/1999 |
| Virginia Run Elementary PTA | 7/9/1999 |
| West Springfield Elem. PTA | 9/29/1999 |
| Westlawn Elem. PTA | 7/6/1999 |
| W T Woodson High PTSA | 11/17/1999 |

Reflections

It is November and that means that many of the schools are accepting the Reflections entries from students or will be in the next few days. What steps are next?



- Remind the PTA President and Treasurer that dues must be paid by July 30 and for the current year in a timely manner.
 - Dues are to be paid to two different places and they are PER PTA MEMBER.
 - \$2.50 is paid to the State to cover National (\$1.75) and State (.75) dues
 - .25 is paid to County Council to cover FCCPTA dues
- Check entries submitted for rule violations and ask students to correct them. Make certain that **both** the child's signature and parent's signature is on the Entry Form.
- Make certain that you have completely filled in the School Chairperson information on the entry forms, as well. **Entries MUST be completed by the School Chairperson.** If you do not know your school's Eight-Digit National PTA ID #, contact the PTA President. If your ID # is only 5 digits long, put zeroes in front of the number. So, if your number is 14179 – change it to 00014179.
- Deliver entries to judges, along with a copy of the rules and judging sheets. Make sure you have covered the child's name so that the judges cannot see who has done the work. Ask the judges to make sure they choose one (1) overall winner (called Outstanding Interpretation in this document) in each age category in each division. You cannot send two entries to the County Council level.
- Order ribbons, certificates, etc. for students who entered. You can order a catalog from Hodges Badge Company (800.556.2440) or online www.hodgesbadge.com.
- Once entries have been picked up from judges –
 - Make sure Outstanding Interpretation winners followed **all** rules.
 - Make sure Official Entry Form is completed in its entirety. It **MUST** be signed by the student **and** the parent/guardian and the Chairperson must have completed the area at the bottom of the form.

- Make sure that you complete the boxes at the bottom of the winning entries. You will need to complete them BEFORE you submit your winning entries to the next level (County Council level). How do you complete them?
 - **Local PTA Good Standing Status** – this means that your PTA/PTSA has paid its membership dues (to both state/national and county), has paid its insurance, and that your PTA is up-to-date on your bylaws.
 - **Membership Dues Date Paid** – put the date that your Treasurer sent in the last dues payment to State/National and County Council.
 - **Insurance Date Paid** – put the date that your Treasurer sent their Insurance payment in.
 - **Bylaws Approval Date** – put the date of your last Bylaw Revision. Are you in the process of reviewing your bylaws? If so, write the words "Bylaws in revision." Don't know? Ask your PTA President.
- Consider shrink-wrapping and mounting entries (Visual Arts and Photography).
- Consider making copies for yourself if Recognition Ceremony held early.

December

- Put article in school newsletter to announce your school winners.
- Get entries from school several days in advance of turn-in date. In case of inclement weather or another emergency, you might not be able to pick up your entries at the last minute.
- Turn in Outstanding Interpretation winners to Council level of judging on December 4th at Luther Jackson Middle School cafeteria (3020 Gallows Road, Falls Church). ****This date is subject to change!! Check the website for last minute information – www.fccpta.org.***
 - Complete Local Form A (found in Reflections Handbook)
 - Complete Tracking Form (found on FCCPTA website – www.fccpta.org)

Lisa Lombardozzi

FCCPTA Reflections Chairperson
703-973-4444
LLOMBO@sigkit

FCPS

Department of Special Services, Office of Special Education

The Special Education Ombudsmen: Parents Supporting Parents

Fairfax County Public Schools has expanded support services for families of students with disabilities. Parents can now access the services of a special education ombudsman for guidance and support. The eight ombudsmen, all parents of students who receive special education services, are part of a network that provides assistance to parents who are navigating the special education process and feel they can benefit from the advice and knowledge of a more experienced and specially trained parent. Parent ombudsmen can provide information about the special education process and services provided by FCPS, as well as information about special education regulations, procedures, and policies. They may collaborate with parents to assist them in resolving problems in a positive way. They may also attend individualized education program (IEP) or school-based meetings to help parents and staff members reach consensus regarding the special education process.

2004-2005 Ombudsmen

- Cluster I: Donna Rich, 703-204-3992 X7534, Donna.Rich@fcps.edu
- Cluster II: Tana Leasure, 703-204-3992 X7533, Tana.Leasure@fcps.edu
- Cluster III: Jane Thatcher, 703-246-8247, Jane.Thatcher@fcps.edu
- Cluster IV: Patty Reynolds, 703-329-2514, Patricia.Reynolds@fcps.edu
- Cluster V: Tammy Beswick, 703-329-2534, Tammy.Beswick@fcps.edu
- Cluster VI: Phyllis Cook, 703-246-7730, Phyllis.Cook@fcps.edu
- Cluster VII: Karen Maizel, 703-246-8246, Karen.Maizel@fcps.edu
- Cluster VIII: Dede Schrader, 703-246-7731, Deidre.Schrader@fcps.edu

Additional Support for Parents:

Parent Resource Center (PRC)

703-204-3941 <http://www.fcps.edu:DSSSE/prc>

Special Education Support

The FCCPTA special education committee would like to encourage all local PTAs to support parents of children with special needs by helping to disseminate information at your schools. There are many resources available to our parents in Fairfax County, ranging from workshops sponsored by the Parent Resource Center to parent run support groups for every disability category, yet most parents are aware of only a fraction of these. They need your help if they are to receive the information they require to help their children.

One way you can help is to publicize events and parent groups in your newsletters and to arrange for translated copies when appropriate to your community. Another and almost indispensable way is to have a special education parent on your PTA to serve as a contact person and funnel information in the right direction. A handbook for Special Education PTA Representatives is available on the FCCPTA website; the special education representatives have an email group which anyone can join by going to <http://yahogroups.com/group/specialedfairfax>.

Margaret Fisher, jrosenthal2@cox.net

Award Winning Software for Struggling Readers: Free CD

Submitted By: Connie Lorentzen, VP

Kurzweil Educational Systems is an innovator of reading, writing, and learning software for people with ADHD, dyslexia or other learning difficulties. Their flagship product, Kurzweil 3000, is used in school systems across the country and is a powerful tool for helping students with reading difficulties.

For parents, this award winning software can help their child access their reading materials more independently at home. Parents no longer need to read tests, books or other assignments to their child, but can use Kurzweil 3000 to read to their child for them. This can cut back on homework struggles and allow a child with reading difficulties to work more independently.

Kurzweil 3000 has received several industry awards recognizing it as: 1) Best Educational Special Needs Solution from the Software and Information Industry Association; 2) Best Software for Special Education from Media & Methods Magazine; and, 3) Best Software for Secondary Special Education from CompuEd Gazette's BESSIE Awards.

To learn more about Kurzweil Educational Systems, request a free Trial CD, and receive a complementary copy of the research summary "Scientifically Based Research Validating Kurzweil 3000," please call 1-800-894-5374 or visit www.kurzweiled.com/attention.asp.

FCPS

Gifted and Talented

Frequently Asked Questions ...



What GT Services Are Available in FCPS?

FCPS is committed to providing challenging learning experiences for all learners that build on individual strengths and optimize academic potential. In order to meet the needs and develop the abilities of highly able learners, FCPS provides advanced learning opportunities through a continuum of GT services.

- Gifted and Talented Levels of Service
- Kindergarten-Grade 2 Differentiated Services
- Grades 3-6 School-Based Program
- Grades 3-8 Center Program
- Grades 7-8 School-Based Program
- Grades 7-8 Honors Program
- High School Programs

For more information and the answers to the following questions see:

<http://www.fcps.k12.va.us/DIS/gt/faq.htm>

School-Based GT Program

- How are students identified for the school-based program?
- What services are available for students in grades K, 1, and 2?
- What is the Young Scholars Initiative?
- What services are available for students in grades 3-6?
- What services are available for students in middle school?

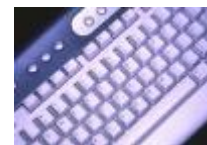
GT Center Program

- How is the GT Center program different from the school-based GT program?
- Where are GT Centers located?
- In what grades are students eligible to attend a GT Center?
- How is transportation provided to a GT Center?

- What are the student-teacher ratios for GT Center classes?
- Are there space limitations in the GT Center Program?
- Can a sibling of a student in a GT Center be pupil placed at the same school?
- How much homework can students expect to receive?
- Are there orientations/tours for students who are eligible for the GT Center program?
- What happens if my child is found eligible for the GT Center program but chooses not to attend the center?
- How are teachers chosen to teach in the GT Center?
- How do parents/guardians refer FCPS students for GT Center screening?

FCCPTA Scholarships for PTS Programs

Each year, the Fairfax County Council of PTAs proudly administers a scholarship program for our high school graduates who are furthering their education in fields which they first studied in our **Professional Technical Studies (PTS) programs.**



In the past few years, our member PTAs, who fund this entire program through their donations, have collectively helped many deserving students further their education in programs as diverse as health and medical technologies, graphic design, automotive technology, hospitality and tourism, animal sciences, computer engineering, and culinary arts. Your collective generosity has shown that we are truly a community that cares.

This year, there are a record number of students enrolled in PTS courses, and your continued support has never been more important. A donation of just \$50 from each PTA would raise almost \$10,000, and a donation of just 10 cents per child in each school would generate over \$15,000. Please ask your members to consider a small donation.



If you have any questions concerning the scholarship program, please contact Alan Krishnan at 703-758-8572, or email him at alan.krishnan@ionidea.com. Donations should be made payable to the "FCCPTA Scholarship Fund" and can be mailed to Alan at the following address: 12607 Franklin Farm Road, Oak Hill, VA 20171.

“Approved by the PTA”— What Does That Really Mean?

As advocates for children, an important part of our mission is to speak for children. When we appear at public hearings and meeting, or write letters to newspapers or legislators, who are we really speaking for? The most meaningful comments come from grass roots efforts. Officials want to hear from their local constituents. It is very important for PTA leaders to be very clear about who they are speaking for. If your local unit PTA general membership has voted on a motion, resolution or position paper, it is a very powerful message to say “The members of the John Smith School PTA fully support (or oppose)”, but you must have an official vote at a general membership meeting that has been recorded in the minutes with a quorum present in order to do that. If your executive board has voted on the issue, then you are empowered to say “The Executive Board of the John Smith School PTA fully supports” If your Executive committee (elected officers and principal) has voted on an issue, then you must specifically state that “The Executive Committee (or officers) of the John Smith School PTA fully support” When County Council officers speak at public hearings or Virginia PTA officers speak at public hearings, they always make this important distinction. This is why our legislative program and resolutions process at convention are so important. We like to be able to speak on behalf of our entire membership, but if it is not practical to call a special meeting to take a vote because of timing issues, then you may still speak out. Just be sure you are clear on exactly whom you are speaking for.

New FCPS Regs for PTA Sponsored After-School Programs

FCPS Regulation 8424.3 applies to all PTAs or booster groups that hold a class, clinic, or camp for students that involves paying an instructor. In order to comply with the regulation, you must:

- be sure that the instructor is a FCPS employee
- prepare a budget
- complete a FCPS time sheet
- send check to FCPS to cover payroll for instructor and other building use costs

(Please refer to FCPS Reg 5640 for payment procedures for instructors.)

The complete FCPS regulations can be found at www.fcps.edu/Directives or in hard copy form in the main office at any FCPS school.

State, District and County PTA leaders have always discouraged PTAs from paying individuals directly for teaching, coaching or supervising after school activities or classes. Paying an individual directly puts the PTA in the position of being an employer which could result in IRS issues, workman’s comp issues, or liability issues. For these reasons, PTAs have always been counseled to contract with companies that provide services so that the individual conducting the class or activity is an employee of that company and not the PTA. Now these individuals must be FCPS employees so that we can be sure that they are fingerprinted and background checked for the ultimate safety of our children. We realize the new regulations have caused some confusion. The FCCPTA and FCPS held two joint training sessions in September to explain these regs and answer questions. If you were unable to attend, please feel free to contact one of us for information.

Lynn Terhar, FCCPTA President – 703-968-6949 or fccpta@cox.net or Amy Craig, FCPS Office of Community Use of Buildings at Amy.Craig@fcps.edu.

Washington Post Question and Answer Column: Extra Credit

The Washington Post education reporter, Jay Matthews, has a question and answer column, Extra Credit, every Thursday in the Fairfax Extra section of the Post. Each week he answers reader questions about the Fairfax County schools. This message is from him Send your questions to: mathewsj@washpost.com. The beauty of this column is that it forces us, the arrogant mighty Post, to start thinking about what’s important to YOU, rather than what is important to us. So even little questions or complaints, the personal gripes or curiosities you think are beneath our interest, will be good for me to get. They might even lead to bigger stories in the paper.

Pass this information onto PTA Members or anyone else you know who might have some questions about what is going on in the Fairfax County schools.

Thanks very much.

School Enrollment Impacts of Proposed New Housing

Now citizens can see what new housing is proposed in their schools.

Impact statements are posted for affected schools as they are issued. By School: on the FCPS web-site. By Case Number (as they are completed). See: <http://www.fcps.edu/fts/impacts/>



Lessons from Harper Valley, Part 2

First, I need to make a correction about Mrs. Johnson. I stated that she was divorced. However, the song starts out “I want to tell you all a story ‘bout a Harper Valley widowed wife.” (Like my daughter says, “I knew that.” I realized my error after the newsletter went to print.) While back in the sixties being a ‘widowed wife’ would probably be less “stigmatizing” than a divorced mother, both situations produce a single parent.

So what went wrong with the Harper Valley PTA? First, the unit could be seen as “cliquish” even if it wasn’t. One can make an inference that Harper Valley was either a “company town” or founded by the Harpers because there are references to the town Harper Valley, Harper Valley Jr. High, Harper Valley PTA, and Mr. Harper. The other members referred to in the song are probably friends or business associates of Mr. Harper. One interesting item is that about half of the members mentioned in the song are men.

They were not inclusive. They were not overjoyed with Mrs. Johnson because she was “different”. PTAs today have to be open to all types of members. The days of the stereotypical stay-at-home mom (“She does the carpool, she PTAs” – Mary Chapin Carpenter’s “He Thinks He’ll Keep Her”, early 1990’s) as our members have been over for at least 15 years.

Their method of help wasn’t appropriate. The letter home can be seen as trying to help Mrs. Johnson with the difficulties of being a single mother. Of course, phrases like “we don’t believe you ought to be bringing up your little girl this way” aren’t going to bring out positive reactions from someone who receives them. One way to help parents is to hold programs like “How to Help Your Child Succeed at Home” and “How to Help Your Child Succeed at School”, part of National PTA’s Building Successful Partnerships Program. To request a presentation on either Building Successful Partnerships (the 6 standards for Parental Involvement Programs) or either “How to Help Your Child Succeed” program, contact Debbie Levenson-Bruner, Virginia PTA’s Parental Involvement Chair at parenting@vapta.org. There are several National PTA trained Building Successful Partnerships presenters here in Fairfax County.

“People who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.” The board members were denouncing Mrs. Johnson’s behavior (“running around with men and going wild”) while practicing the same behavior themselves. As Dr. Seizer told us, the children (and for PTA actions, the adults) are watching.

Following the Mission and Purposes of PTA along with relying on your bylaws will keep your local unit from becoming Fairfax’s Harper Valley.

Speaking of bylaws... If your unit is participating in the Reflections Program, your bylaws must be current or in the state office for their five-year review before the FCCPTA drop off date of 12/4. If an entry advances to District, State, or National levels, your bylaws again must be current or under review at each cutoff date. ***Please don’t penalize your students!*** Your bylaws are an important legal document and current bylaws are needed to keep your local unit in good standing. Don’t know where your bylaws are? The local unit president can request a copy of their bylaws from the state office either by e-mail at info@vapta.org or by phone on 1-866-4vakids.

Bill Levey

Fairfax District PTA, District Director
Virginia PTA
everychild.onevoice.

State and District PTA

Below is contact information for the Fairfax District PTA and State PTA officers who live in Fairfax.

Fairfax District PTA

Director - Bill Levey

703-721-0319 fairfaxdd@vapta.org

First Assistant Director - Lynn Terhar

703-968-6949 fairfaxdd_asst@vapta.org

State PTA Board Members

President - Ramona Morrow

703-455-9603 president@vapta.org

Membership - Michele Menapace

703-329-8236 membership@vapta.org

Volunteers - Dottie Andrews

703-690-7533 volunteers@vapta.org

National & Beyond - Educational Issues



PTA Members' Website Password Expires November 1

PTA members, please be aware that the user name and password for National PTA's Members' website will expire November 1. The new user name and password are printed on your 2004-2005 PTA membership card.

Don't miss out on the parenting articles, e-learning courses, guidance for running a PTA, and resources available on the Members' site. What's more, the Members' site is your gateway to learn about special member benefits from companies including Alliant Credit Union, Barnesandnoble.com, FedEx Kinko's, and S&S Worldwide.



Excellent Schools Don't Just Happen ... They're Created! Become a National PTA's "School of Excellence"

Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification will help all schools in the nation assess their parent involvement practices, make improvements where needed, and earn one or two distinctions:

- **Certification of Excellence**, for schools that have outstanding parent involvement practices in place.
- **Recognition of Commitment**, for schools that are committed to pursuing excellence in parent involvement.

Establish a team, including parents, a teacher, student, the principal, and a community member, and complete the assessment, available in the Parent Involvement area of

www.pta.org

Flu Prevention Tips

*From the Department of Health and Human Services
Center for Disease Control and Prevention*

- **Avoid close contact.**
Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.**
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Clean your hands.**
Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**
Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Life Long Learning: Distance-Ed Group Now Open To Public

<http://www.alllearn.org/>

Submitted By: Connie Lorentzen, 1st VP

The Alliance for Lifelong Learning, a nonprofit distance-education company run by Stanford University, the University of Oxford, and Yale University, has a new name and is open to the public. Now called AllLearn, the company's courses were formerly only open to alumni of the three supporting universities. The venture, similar to Columbia University's Fathom project, will make about 50 distance courses available. Tuition for each course is \$250, and each course will last between five and ten weeks. A spokeswoman from AllLearn said the group always intended to make the program available to the public. Others question whether the decision was made because the venture was not as successful as its founders had hoped.

*Chronicle of Higher Education, August 22, 2002
<http://chronicle.com/free/2002/08/2002082201t.htm>*

Peer Pressure: An Issue That Crosses Generations

by Karen Kittredge and Alice R. McCarthy

Spread the good news: Parents are important!

Let's start with some good news. Adolescents may say that they rely more on friends than on family, but don't be discouraged. Studies have found that these same kids would prefer to learn about a variety of important topics from their parents or other caring adults. Peer influence does increase during these years; however, the influence of caring adults can remain strong if it has been built over the years. Remember that the most common reason that young people give for not using alcohol and drugs is not wanting to harm the relationship between themselves and the caring adults in their lives. Also keep in mind that many schools provide excellent lessons in health education to reinforce what is taught at home. These lessons include practicing refusal skills related to sexual activity, alcohol and other substance use, and gang involvement. Check with your schools to learn more about their health education lessons.

Peer Pressure for Today's Generation

Has the face of peer pressure changed in the last 20 years? Have other societal changes left young people more vulnerable to negative peer pressure? Recent studies support parents' intuitive sense that adolescents today are facing a different world than even one generation ago.

Nicholas Zill, Ph.D., director of the child and family study area at the survey research firm Westat, is co-author of the Child Trends report, *Running in Place: How American Families Are Faring in a Changing Economy* and an *Individualistic Society* (www.childtrends.org). In this report, Zill speaks about recent societal changes that may make today's youth more vulnerable to peer influence, targeting four main points. First, adult authority is weaker and more fragmented. Second, young people are spending more time with peers, with very little regular interaction with adults. Third, teenagers have more freedom in their own lives than previous generations of young people. They have greater freedom of choice regarding friends, school commitments, sexual activity, and career paths. Fourth, the mass media industry exposes adolescents to a much broader range of experiences, influencing young people in ways that are still under study.

The peer culture in most U.S. high schools is working against the goals of parents, according to Zill's study. Parents report that they do not want their teenagers to smoke or drink, yet the majority of high school students have friends at school who think these activities are OK. More than 80 percent of high school students can easily

get cigarettes at school and almost half have no problem getting alcohol. Parents want their teens to do well in school, and most students have high goals as well. Yet less than 40 percent of high school students say they have friends at school who think it is very important to work hard for good grades, and less than 30 percent have friends who say it is very important to behave well in school.

Teaching teens that saying no doesn't mean losing friends. Parents have many opportunities to steer their children in the direction of "positive peer pressure," such as joining the soccer team or trying out for the school play, rather than negative peer pressure. Sharon Scott, a nationally known family therapist and author of *How To Say No and Keep Your Friends*, draws on decades of experience leading peer pressure training programs for thousands of adults and youth. She offers a wealth of specific training tools parents can use to help preteens and teens learn to get out of peer pressure situations gracefully.

Tactics can be as simple as just saying no over and over, or casually walking away from a situation that looks like trouble. Teens can ignore a friend's bad idea by looking preoccupied, changing the subject to something surprising and interesting, or making a joke of it. Many teens cope with tough situations by making an excuse to get out of it, such as, "I can't, my mom is expecting me to be home soon." Young people can have a positive influence on a friend's behavior in a tough moment by showing exaggerated shock at a poor idea or immediately suggesting a better idea for an activity. Any of these actions can help persuade peers to make better choices, too.

Parenting Tips for Countering Peer Pressure

There are many steps parents can take at home in their daily interactions with their children that will build a young person's character and diminish the chance of making poor choices in a hard moment.

For example, parents can

- Build connections with their teenager's friends by offering them frequent invitations to join the family for dinner, outings, and travel.
- Get to know the families of these friends and suggest that ground rules be reinforced among the different households.
- Encourage their teen's participation in groups—such as scouting, boys and girls clubs, religious groups, and volunteering opportunities—make sure teens have transportation, and attend some events with them.

Pediatrician Bruce A. Epstein, M.D., writing for the American Academy of Pediatrics, offers these recommendations to parents (Visit www.allkids.org, click on "Information for Families," then go to the "Doctor's Office."):

- Work on building strong bonds with your child long before he or she reaches the teen years. The weight of these bonds will influence your teen's choices.
- Build your child's self-esteem at a very early age. Youngsters with a good self-image will seek out membership in more positive social groups.
- Teach your child decision-making skills. Children who can use good judgment are less likely to let others make decisions for them.
- Set limits with your child, use discipline, and role model for them what it looks like to say no and stand by it. Over time, it will help your children to discipline themselves to say no to a friend who wants to make trouble.

Advice for Healthy Eating



Parents can turn around their families' eating habits by making some changes.

Include children in meal planning and preparation, such as writing grocery lists, setting the table, tearing apart lettuce for a salad, and scrubbing vegetables.

Don't use food as a reward.

Keep junk food out of the house.

Eat together as a family as much as possible. Not only does this offer an opportunity for parents to control what their children eat, but family members can talk about their day, tell stories, and laugh together. Despite heeding such advice, parents may still find it a challenge to say no when it seems every time a new children's movie is in theaters, kids see a commercial for a new sugary cereal or a toy ("premium") being offered in fast-food kids' meals. It's even more difficult when the toy is part of a series and children are enticed to "collect all four." For older children and teens, the challenge may be teaching them to resist marketing ploys for giveaways and contests whereby kids have to collect bottle caps or UPC labels to increase the chance to win or save to "earn" merchandise. Parents may be succumbing to children's food demands because it's affordable to say yes, whereas video games, toys, clothing, and other "big ticket" items may be out of the question. Nevertheless, children and teens need guidance, whether it's about nutrition, homework, dating, clothing purchases, music, or any other matter.

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Your Words and Actions Matter

Did You Know?

Two-thirds of teens say that losing their parents' respect and pride is one of the main reasons they don't smoke marijuana or use other drugs.

Visit TheAntiDrug.com for monitoring advice.

Ask the Right Questions: Who? What? Where? When?

Know where your teen is and what he or she will be doing during unsupervised time. Research shows that teens with unsupervised time are three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs. Unsupervised teens are also more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as underage drinking, sexual activity, and cigarette smoking than other teens.

Visit http://www.theantidrug.com/advice/advice_ask_questions.asp

Start An Ongoing Conversation

The most important thing to remember when it comes to talking about difficult subjects like drinking and drugs is that it's not a five-minute "talk" - it's about building an ongoing dialogue. So start early and build on the conversation as your teen matures.

Visit http://www.theantidrug.com/advice/advice_start_conv.asp

How Much Time Do You Spend with Your Kids?

The following information is from the American Time Use Survey conducted in 2003 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov/tus).

How Adults Age 18+ in homes that have children under age 18 spent their time caring for those children:

| (Avg, Minutes Per Day) | Men | Women |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Physical Care | 13 | 41 |
| Playing/Doing Hobbies | 13 | 15 |
| Travel With Kids | 7 | 13 |
| Attending Events/Looking After | 5 | 9 |
| Education Related Activities | 4 | 8 |
| Reading/Talking to or with kids | 2 | 7 ** |
| Other childcare activities | 4 | 11 |

**Please take time to read to and talk with your kids every day. Make it a priority.

Safeguarding Your Children at School:



Helping Children Deal with a School Bully

Bullying is often considered a “kids will be kids” problem. According to the National School Safety Center, however, bullying has become a pervasive and serious form of harassment in many schools. Dr. Dan Olweus, a professor of psychology and leading expert on bully-victim problems, reports that one child in 10 is regularly attacked either verbally or physically by bullies. Elementary school-age children are the most frequent target of bullying by older students. The best way to safeguard your children from becoming a victim of a bully is to teach them how to be assertive. This involves encouraging your children to express their feelings clearly, to say no when they feel pressured or uncomfortable, to stand up for themselves verbally without fighting, and to walk away in more dangerous situations. Bullies are less likely to intimidate children who are confident and resourceful.

Profile on Bullies

The following are traits common to bullies:

- They are concerned with their own pleasure rather than thinking about anyone else.
- They want power.
- They are willing to use other people to get what they want.
- They feel hurt inside.
- They find it difficult to see things from someone else’s perspective.

From Helping Kids Handle Conflict, National Crime Prevention Council in association with the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Tips for Helping Children Deal with Bullies

- Teach your children early on to steer clear of youth with bullying behavior.
- Teach your children to be assertive rather than aggressive or violent when confronted by a bully. Instruct them to walk away and get help from an adult in more dangerous situations. Practice various responses with your children through role-playing.
- Teach your children to never defend themselves from bullies with a gun or other weapon.

- Keep communication lines open with your children. Encourage your children to share information about school and school-related activities.
- Pay attention to the following symptoms that may indicate your child is being bullied: withdrawal, abrupt lack of interest in school, a drop in grades, or signs of physical abuse.
- If your child is a victim of bullying at school, inform school officials immediately. Keep your own written records of the names, dates, times, and circumstances of bullying incidents. Submit a copy of this report to the school principal.
- Respond to your children’s concerns and fears with patience, love, and support.

For More Information

Safe at School: Awareness and Action for Parents of Kids K-12

by Carol Silverman Saunders

Free Spirit Publishing Inc.
400 First Ave. N., Suite 616
Minneapolis, MN 55401-1730
(612) 338-2068

The tips in this book help parents deal with bullying, gangs, sexual harassment, and other school safety issues.

Set Straight on Bullies

by Stuart Greenbaum with Brenda Turner and Ronald D. Stephens

National School Safety Center
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(805) 373-9977

The problem of bullying is examined in this book. It offers prevention and intervention strategies for parents, teachers, and students.

Why Is Everybody Always Picking on Me?

A Guide to Handle Bullies

by Terrence Webster-Doyle

Atrium Society Publications
P.O. Box 816
Middlebury, VT 05753
(800) 966-1998 or (802) 388-0922

This book helps children and teens to develop the confidence needed to resolve conflicts without fighting and to cope with bullies.

Improving the Academic Performance of Children: The Father Factor

by Roland C. Warren

A report released by the U.S. Department of Education, *Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's School by Family Type and Resident Status* (based on the National Household Education Survey, May 2001), found that a parent's school involvement seemed to make the difference in the students' school experience. (Involvement in school was measured by attendance at a general school meeting, regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, and a school or class event, in addition to volunteering at the school.) The study also found that the level of a parent's school involvement varied by whether they were biological parents or stepparents, and whether the children lived with two biological parents, a single parent, or a stepparent. What was most striking, however, was the significant role that fathers appeared to play in the academic performance of their children.

Father involvement in school was associated with the higher likelihood of a student getting mostly A's. This was true for fathers in biological parent families, for stepfathers, and for fathers heading single-parent families. In addition, father involvement in two-biological parent families was associated with the lower likelihood of a student ever repeating a grade. The report also complemented other parenting research perspectives suggesting that mothers tend to be more nurturing whereas fathers tend to focus more on achievement.

It was clear that there was a "father factor" involved in the academic performance of children. Any efforts to improve the academic performance of kids, therefore, must have a strategy to significantly involve fathers in the education process.

How can PTAs involve more fathers in their children's education? The question remains, how do we involve more fathers in the education of their children, especially in a country where currently one out of every three children lives in a home where a father does not reside? The experience of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) has shown us that engaging fathers is a rewarding but sometimes difficult endeavor. In fact, NFI has developed a workshop and process called the Agency Audit on Father Inclusive Practices to assist organizations in their efforts to become more "father friendly." This approach is quite detailed; however, below are three elements that any strategy to involve fathers needs to consider:

1. Seek to raise awareness about the importance of father involvement. Here are three ideas for PTAs:

- Send home brochures and information addressed specifically to fathers to inform them of the important role they play in their child's educational achievement and to inspire them to stay involved in their child's education.
 - Host father-child events like dances, bowling parties, and sporting events, and use these gatherings as times to educate fathers about their special role.
 - Make special efforts to recognize fathers on Father's Day or create a "holiday" to recognize and encourage father involvement.
2. Use a project-oriented approach when involving fathers. Most people did not have to read *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* to figure out that men and women are different. In general, women tend to be more relational and men tend to be more event or project driven. Local PTAs that seek to involve more fathers must be thoughtful and take into account the differences between men and women. Accordingly, rather than trying to get fathers to join a long-standing committee, it may be wiser to initially ask fathers to commit to do a specific task or project that has a clearly defined start and end date, and clearly defined goals and objectives.
 3. Connect and collaborate with organizations that have high father involvement. A reporter once asked outlaw Jesse James why he robbed banks. He responded simply, "Because that's where the money is!" James was on to something. Local PTAs that want to involve more fathers need to go to where the fathers are—for example, Rotary Club, the Kiwanis, the Boy Scouts, the Police Athletics League, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and local places of worship—and create partnerships with organizations that have high levels of father involvement. The NFI could be a great partner for local PTAs as well since it has specific resources that are designed to help fathers connect with their children. Once the local PTAs identify key partners, they can leverage these relationships and collaborate with these partners to get the message out that father involvement is important.

I encourage local PTAs to continue to take a leadership role in improving the education prospects of the nation's children by encouraging all fathers to be involved in the education of their children.

Roland Warren is president of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI). He may be reached at the National Fatherhood Initiative, 101 Lake Forest Blvd., Ste. 360, Gaithersburg, MD 20877, or via e-mail at info@fatherhood.org.

Visit NFI online at www.fatherhood.org.

FCCPTA Dues Payment Form - 2004-2005

Print cut out this form, fill out required information, and mail with your check to:

Alan L. Krishnan
Treasurer: FCCPTA
12607 Franklin Farm Road
Oak Hill, VA 20171

All local PTA and PTSA units are required to submit their Dues (**\$0.25/member**) along with this form to the Fairfax County Council of PTAs by **December 1**. (Additional Dues for new members joining after December 1 should be submitted by **June 1**.)

Space is also provided on this form to include an optional contribution to the FCCPTA Scholarship Program. (Visit the FCCPTA website – www.fccpta.org for more information.) Please check with your PTA or PTSA Board to determine if your local unit has elected to participate.

| Please provide the following contact information: | |
|---|---|
| School Name | |
| Type of School (Circle) | Elementary Middle High School Center |
| Your Name | |
| Your Title | |
| Work Phone | |
| Home Phone | |
| Email Address | |
| Today's Date | |

| Determine amount to be paid: | |
|------------------------------|--|
| | Number of individual members. |
| .25 | Multiply by this amount. |
| \$ | Total Amount of Dues |
| \$ | Add Scholarship Fund donation (optional) |
| \$ | Total Amount Enclosed |
| \$ | Total Amount Paid by Check |
| | Check Number |

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Make Check Payable To: Fairfax County Council of PTAs

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