



BULLETIN

The Connecticut Association of Schools
The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference



Affiliated with: National Federation of State High School Associations • National Assoc. of Secondary School Principals • National Middle School Assoc. • National Assoc. of Elementary School Principals

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STAFFORD ADMINISTRATOR NAMED CONNECTICUT'S 2009 NDP



DR. MARCIA ELLIOTT
CT's 2009 National Distinguished Principal

Congratulations to **Dr. Marcia Elliott**, principal of West Stafford School in Stafford Springs, who was named *Connecticut's 2009 National Distinguished Principal*. She was nominated for the award by her colleague, Francis Kennedy, principal of Stafford High School.

Marcia earned a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from Manhattanville College

in New York and a master of arts and doctorate of education degree from the University of Connecticut. She has served the Stafford Public Schools since 1999 when she joined the district as its director of curriculum and instruction. According to Stafford Elementary School Principal Henry Skala, during her tenure as curriculum director, Marcia "invigorated the district with thoughtful and powerful initiatives" including a reflective, assessment-driven teacher evaluation system which became one of the models used as exemplars in the state. In 2003, Marcia was appointed principal of the then Borough School which served pre-kindergarten through grade three students. In 2007, when the elementary schools in Stafford were reconstituted and Borough School was closed, she assumed her current position as principal of West Stafford School.

Superintendent Dr. Therese Fishman credits Marcia with fostering a vibrant, caring, student-oriented culture where students can grow socially and emotionally as well as academically. "If you visit West Stafford School, you will know immediately that you are in a special place that is warm and nurturing and child-centered," says Fishman. Each day, students are greeted personally by Marcia and by her daily messages which are prominently displayed on a white board in the school entryway. Her messages are always meaningful and directed; and they aim to inspire what Marcia calls "an ethic of care and a zest for learning."

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JOSTENS PROUD NEW PARTNER OF CAS

By Stephanie Ford, Director of Marketing

For over a century Jostens has been serving high schools across the country, and now they are pleased to announce a new partnership with the Connecticut Association of Schools. Jostens sponsored the recent High School Arts Recognition Banquet and will also be a supporter of the convocation and the assistant principals conference in the fall. In addition to these events, Jostens will be providing rings for the CAS Principals and Assistant Principals of the Year, as well as Memory Books to the CAS Elementary and Middle Schools of the Year.

"We are honored and proud to support CAS and the Principals' Center. We have many long standing partnerships with schools throughout the state, and it seems a natural fit that we partner with CAS. At Jostens we take great care in helping students and teachers celebrate experiences and traditions,



and we are pleased to lend our support to functions such as the high school arts banquet and the Principals' Center events," stated Kevin Myjak, sales representative for Jostens.

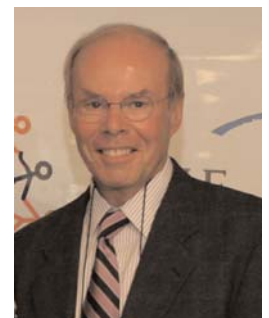
Jostens comprises three main lines of products and services - yearbooks, jewelry, and graduation products. It has been publishing yearbooks for over 50 years and is selected by more schools than any other yearbook producer in the country. Jostens has crafted more than 50 million class rings over the past century and also makes custom rings and awards for athletic teams and their fans. Lastly, each year

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And The Answer Is . . .

By Dave Maloney, Assistant Executive Director

Everyday we are confronted with a seemingly endless array of questions: "Paper or Plastic?" "May I put you on hold?" "Do you want it supersized?" "Whatsup?" "How are you?" In schools, the most popular question asked by students is, "Does this count?" Seldom do we take time, whether in the workplace or at home, for true dialogue, sharing and comparing perspectives from all sides of an issue.



Another popular question educators face is, "How are you going to improve test scores?"

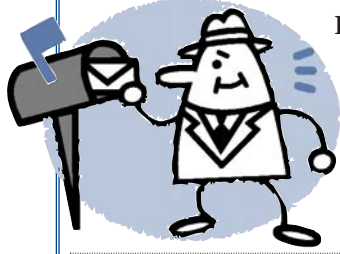
This is a story about a possible answer to that question.

Most reformers point to the need for exemplary leadership in improving student achievement. In these times of high-stakes testing, educators are

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LEGAL MAILBAG

By Attorney Thomas B. Mooney, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut



Editor's Note: *Legal Mailbag* is a regular feature in the CAS BULLETIN. We invite readers to submit short, law-related questions of practical concern to school administrators. Each month we will select questions and publish answers. While these answers cannot be considered formal legal advice, they may be of help to you and your colleagues. We may edit your questions, and we will not identify the authors. Please submit your questions to:

[<legalmailbag@casciac.org>](mailto:legalmailbag@casciac.org)

Q. Dear Mailbag: I am in a bind. I have developed some nice, trusting relationships with the kids at my middle school. However, one of my students has put me on the spot. He asked to talk to me, and of course I said sure. He tearfully told me that he was hooked on marijuana and that he wanted to stop. I listened, and I told him that I was there for him. But then he reached into his pocket and plopped a baggie full of weed right on my desk. We have a zero tolerance policy at our school, which requires that we call the police whenever we confiscate drugs from a student. But if I rat out this struggling young man, he will never trust anyone, and indeed no student will ever share anything with me ever again. Help!

- *Between a Rock and Hard Place*

A. Dear Rock: Relax. Generally speaking, school districts can adopt zero tolerance policies that require police notification whenever drugs are confiscated. However, Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-154a provides that you may decide to keep confidential any information that you (or another administrator, teacher, or school nurse) personally receive from a student about his or her own drug use. Moreover, the statute provides that you will not be liable if you choose to disclose or not to disclose that "professional communication." However, you can't keep the weed. The law also requires that you must turn over to the police any physical evidence that a crime has been committed. Even then, however, you need not disclose the name of the student.

Q. Dear Mailbag: Our school district is considering a policy requiring that our high school students perform community service as a graduation requirement. We think that it would be great for the personal development of our students to learn the joys of serving their fellow man. Students and their families are free to select the activity for community service, just so long as they spend at least twenty hours each year providing that service. Most students are excited to be involved in such satisfying work, but one student and his mother are refusing. They agree that community service is wonderful, but they object as a matter of principle to being forced to do such service by some "bureaucrat" (that would be me). They are even threatening to sue us if we enforce our requirement, claiming that it is "involuntary servitude" in violation of the Thirteenth Amendment. Tell me it ain't so!

- *Helping Hand*

A. Dear Helping: Community service programs raise policy issues, and school boards have debated over whether to adopt such programs. However, it is clear that they are legally permissible. The courts have rejected claims that such programs are "involuntary servitude," the prohibition against slavery. Rather, the courts have held that school districts may adopt graduation requirements that include community service because such a requirement serves legitimate educational purposes, such as learning discipline, service and empathy.

Q. Dear Mailbag: I was making the rounds at school the other day, and when I thought I heard suspicious noises coming from a storeroom, I opened the door. I was shocked to see four boys kneeling on the floor with piles of singles in front of them, with one boy shaking dice in his hands, saying "Cmon, cmon!!" When they saw me, they grabbed their money and stood up. I marched them down to the office and asked them what they were doing. To a boy, they refused to say anything, and I was left to draw the inference that they were gambling. However, when I told the apparent ringleader that he was suspended for gambling, he calmly responded that I didn't have that right because our student handbook says nothing about gambling. I suspended him anyway because I am getting sick of these jailhouse lawyers. But now I am having second thoughts. Do we really have to list every possible disciplinary offense in the student handbook?

- *Judgmental Judy*

A. Dear Judy: No, you don't. In general, student discipline is authorized whenever a student's conduct violates school rules, endangers persons or property or is seriously disruptive of the educational process. By listing all three grounds for discipline in the statute, the General Assembly made clear that discipline is authorized for actions other than violation of school rules. However, it helps avoid arguments from parents and students when you add these three grounds to the student handbook, and then preface the list of specific offenses with a note, "including but not limited to the following." We can never be so creative as to think up and include in the handbook every bad thing that students will do.

ct news & notes

■ Congratulations to **Anthony J. Mullen**, a former New York City police captain and Connecticut's 2009 Teacher of the Year, who has been selected as this year's *National Teacher of the Year!* Mullen, who was honored by President Barack Obama at a recognition ceremony at the White House last month, is a teacher at Greenwich's ARCH School, an alternative high school for at-risk and special needs teens. Mullen worked his way through college while rising in the ranks of the New York City Police Department. His second career as a teacher has given him a chance to make a difference in the lives of some of the district's most challenged students. Mullen was one of four finalists for the national award. Since the inception of the National Teacher of the Year program in 1952, this is only the third time that a Connecticut teacher has been selected as the national winner. For more information on Mullen, visit www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/toy09.pdf.

■ School districts had 4,830 full and part-time teaching positions to fill out of 52,554 total positions, for the fall of 2008. This was a decrease of 575 vacancies from the 2007-08 school year. While total positions decreased only 1.1 percent, vacancies declined by 10.7 percent as a higher percentage of positions were filled this year compared to last.

CT Trivia

✓ Mary Kies of South Killingly, CT was the first woman to receive a U.S. patent. It was issued on May 15, 1809 for a method of weaving straw.

✓ The first automobile law was passed by the State of Connecticut in 1901. The speed limit was set at 12 miles per hour.

(Reprinted from CCM's "Connecticut Town & City," February 2009)

national news & notes

■ The proportion of 13-year-olds taking algebra has grown steadily for at least two decades, but the increase in the number of students taking harder mathematics classes is not translating into higher average math scores by 17-year-olds on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, according to long-term trend data released today. Average scores for 9- and 13-year-olds in math on NAEP have risen since 2004, but scores in that subject for 17-year-olds have not budged significantly since then. In fact, flat scores in math for the older students have persisted since the early 1970s. That's despite the fact that the proportion of 13-year-olds taking algebra has more than doubled—from 13 percent to 30 percent—from 1986 to 2008. Meanwhile, reading scores increased for 17-year-olds since 2004. According to Darvin Winick, the chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees NAEP, one reason that scores for 17-year-olds have stayed flat for more than three decades could be that the kinds of students educated today differ from those educated in the early 1970s. Back then, Mr. Winick said, "if a young person wasn't doing well, they'd be sent to the farm or the docks." Now, he said, it's possible that a greater proportion of students who might have dropped out of school in past decades to join the labor force, who perhaps are less inclined toward academics, are in schools. Another possibility why average math scores are increasing for 9- and 13-year-olds and not for 17-year-olds may be that the lion's share who benefitted from state school reforms haven't yet turned 17, he said.

■ Facing significant budget cuts, the Tucson (AZ) Unified School District is debating whether or not its schools need full-time principals. The district is looking at options that include scaling back on vice principals, employing more half-time principals in lieu of full-time principals, and eliminating the position of principal altogether. Making note of schools across the country that have gone without a principal, the district's superintendent says that eliminating such a position could only be done with a detailed plan in place. [*Arizona Daily Star*, 4/11/09]

■ During a visit with Denver schools last week, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said that for true reform, U.S. students need to spend more time in school. To be on a level playing field with countries like India and China, Duncan suggested that the nation's schools be open six days a week, 11 months a year.

■ In the heat of a turbulent economy, a new survey of prospective college students found that 70% are looking for cheaper college options. Over half are searching out less expensive colleges and another 47% are planning to work as freshmen. Others will rely more heavily on financial aid.

■ According to a report released in March by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), transgender youth face extremely high levels of victimization in school, even more so than their non-transgender lesbian, gay and bisexual peers. But, they are also more likely to speak out about LGBT issues in the classroom, according to *Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools*, the first comprehensive study on transgender students. Nearly nine out of 10 transgender students experienced verbal harassment at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation and gender expression, more than half experienced physical harassment because of their sexual orientation and gender expression and more than a quarter experienced physical assault because of their sexual orientation and gender expression. These levels of victimization were higher than those faced by the non-transgender lesbian, gay and bisexual students who participated in the 2007 National School Climate Survey conducted by GLSEN. To access the full report, visit http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/1375-1.pdf.

■ *On a related note . . .* In the last month alone, two 11-year-old students in the United States committed suicide as a result of the GLBT-related bullying they experienced in school—and the unrelated cases are prompting some educators to re-examine their schools' bullying policies and procedures. On April 6, Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, an 11-year-old sixth-grader from Springfield, Mass., hanged himself with an extension cord in his family's home after being subjected to continuous anti-gay bullying and harassment at his middle school. On April 16, less than two weeks later, Jaheem Herrera, an 11-year-old fifth-grader from DeKalb County, Ga., also hanged himself at home after being the subject of anti-gay taunts from his classmates.

■ More challenging middle level math and increased access to rigorous math courses in predominately black urban high schools is the key to closing the racial achievement gap, suggests a new University of Illinois study.

The study examined a "feedback loop" between math placement, student effort, and academic achievement—and found that students who take more advanced math courses in middle school lengthen their lead over time. They also found that lower math placement at the middle level significantly lowers a student's chances of getting into higher-level math courses in high school, which translates into fewer skills and behaviors and greater achievement gaps in high school. The gap, according to the study, is most evident in high-minority urban schools. [*ScienceDaily*, 4/22/09]

■ *Comparative Indicators of Education in the United States and Other G-8 Countries: 2009*, released in March by the U.S. Department of Education, describes how the education system in the United States compares with education systems in the other Group of Eight (G-8) countries—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom—that are among the world's most economically developed countries and among the United States' largest economic partners. In 2006, all or almost all 3- and 4-year-old children were enrolled in pre-primary or primary education in France and Italy. In Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan, at least 80 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled; in the United States, 48 percent were enrolled. Russian fourth-graders scored highest in reading literacy, and Japanese fourth- and eighth-graders outperformed their G-8 peers in mathematics. As for science, at the fourth grade level, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Russia ranked highest, but by 8th grade, Japan had outpaced everyone else. Fourth-graders in the United States ranked in the middle in reading and math, and low in science. Despite America's middling academic achievement alongside its G-8 peers, our teacher pay was second only to that of Germany. To view the full report, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009039.pdf>. [*PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, April 3, 2009]

■ A new report profiled in *The Boston Globe* has found that, in the wake of a voter-approved law change six years ago that requires all students be taught in English, the high school dropout rate has nearly doubled for English language learners in Boston. The study, which analyzed data between 2003 and 2006, showed that, overall, the law, intended to accelerate English fluency, hasn't helped English language learners to catch up with their English-speaking peers, in many cases leaving them further behind.

Board of Education in Connecticut Awarded Attorneys' Fees by Federal Court in IDEA Case

In the first decision in Connecticut, and one of the only decisions in the country, a federal magistrate judge recently awarded the Stamford Board of Education (the "Board") attorneys' fees under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA").

The case, *E.K. by and through his Parents and Next of Friends, Mr. and Mrs. K. v. Stamford Board of Education*, stemmed from a student's challenge to his expulsion on the grounds that: (1) he had been unlawfully exited from special education services in March 2005 and thus the district could not expel him without first determining if his conduct was a manifestation of his disability; (2) the district violated the student's constitutional right to due process because the district relied, in part, on hearsay statements of student witnesses to the misconduct; and (3) Connecticut General Statutes § 10-233d was unconstitutionally vague. In the spring of 2007, the United States District Court denied the student's request for a preliminary injunction to require the district to readmit the student to Stamford High School and allow him to participate in graduation ceremonies. After this denial, the student, through his attorney, essentially ignored the prosecution of his IDEA claim -- although he did not officially withdraw the claim for several months -- but maintained his other claims, due process and constitutional vagueness. The Board moved for summary judgment; the student opposed this motion and filed his own motion for summary judgment.

In May 2008, the Court granted the Board's motion for summary judgment. The Court found that the Board did not violate the student's due process rights because the hearsay statements used during the expulsion hearing, and as presented at the expulsion hearing through the School Resource Officer, were sufficiently reliable, and other non-hearsay evidence demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that the student had committed the misconduct. The Court further found that the expulsion statute, as applied, provided the student with sufficient notice that his misconduct could result in expulsion.

The Board subsequently filed with the Court a request for attorneys' fees against the student's attorney, on the grounds that the attorney had pursued his claim under the IDEA after he knew the claim to be frivolous, and that he did so to harass or increase the cost of litigation. The IDEA, as amended in 2004, permits a board of education to recover attorneys' fees against a parent's attorney if the attorney "continued to litigate after the litigation clearly became frivolous, unreasonable, or without foundation," or "if the parent's complaint or subsequent cause of action was presented for any improper purpose, such as to harass, to cause unnecessary delay, or to needlessly increase the cost of litigation."

In this case, the Court found that the Board was the prevailing party in the underlying litigation, because the Court had granted the Board's motion for summary judgment in its entirety; and further found that the student's and parents' attorney had continued to litigate the IDEA claims after the attorney knew that the litigation had become frivolous. According to the Court, "after the Court denied injunctive relief . . . , plaintiff was clearly on notice of the deficiencies of his IDEA claim." The Court then awarded fees paid by the student's and parents' attorney to the Board for the work of the Board's attorneys in preparing the motion to dismiss and attorneys' fees application. The plaintiffs' attorney has since filed an objection to the Magistrate Judge's ruling.

This litigation spanned over two years and involved the pursuit by the student's and parents' attorney of a patently frivolous claim under the IDEA. The 2004 Amendments to the IDEA that permit a board of education to be awarded attorneys' fees from a parent or parent attorney can be used to assist a board to recoup fees expended on such clearly frivolous cases or cases pursued to harass. While these standards are exceedingly high, and most special education cases have some basis in law and fact, the case is a victory for boards of education that face groundless IDEA litigation continued or initiated with an obvious intent to harass.

If you have questions about this alert, please contact Shipman & Goodwin LLP attorneys Gwen Zittoun at gzittoun@goodwin.com or Andreana R. Bellach at abellach@goodwin.com.

ARE YOU RETIRING THIS YEAR?

Have you finally reached that seemingly elusive milestone? If so, please let us know! All retiring principals and assistant principals receive life memberships in CAS. If you plan to retire this year, or if you know of any principal or assistant principal who is so planning, kindly visit www.casciac.org/retiringad-mins and fill in the requested fields. This task should take no more than a minute of your time.

CAS-CIAC CONTINGENCY PLAN REGARDING SWINE FLU

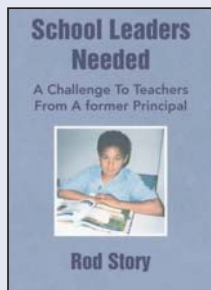
With every day that passes, there is increasing concern about the spread of swine flu throughout the state. At the present time, there are several schools that have closed in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease. It is possible that, in the next few weeks, many more schools will follow suit. Therefore, it was prudent that CAS-CIAC determine a course of action that will allow it to finish out the school year in a manner which protects the health of its participants and, at the same time, minimizes the disruption of its planned activities.

The following plan has been approved by the CAS Board of Directors and the CIAC Board of Control:

1. All CAS and CIAC activities will continue to be held as planned unless information received through the governor's office or the state commissioner's office directs or advises alternative measures.
2. Decisions of individual superintendents to allow students to participate or not participate will be honored. If a school is closed and both superintendents approve of an individual's or team's participation, it will be honored by CAS and CIAC.
3. The CIAC will, to the fullest extent possible, grant accommodations so that contests postponed due to swine flu concerns can be made up. This includes waving the provision in Article VII, Sec. B-3 which precludes Sunday play. Contests postponed due to swine flu concerns may be made up on Sundays if both schools are in agreement to do so; however, no Sunday contest may be scheduled to begin before 12:30 p.m.
4. Teams that are unable to play the minimum number of games required for tournament entry because of swine flu-related cancellations will not be excluded from post-season play. All other minimum standards for qualification - i.e., minimum winning percentage - will be enforced.
5. No league tournament contest can be scheduled or rescheduled in place of regular season contests.
6. The dates of all tournament finals will remain unchanged unless an action is taken by the CIAC Board of Control. However, all tournament games prior to the finals will be scheduled with the maximum flexibility possible to accommodate individual schools impacted by school closings. This includes playing contests on Sunday in accordance with CIAC Sunday rule provisions. The decision to allow a team to participate in a scheduled tournament contest when school is closed rests with the district superintendent.
7. Tournaments will proceed with those school teams that are available to play.

Former Connecticut Principal Authors Book on Developing Teacher Leaders

School Leaders Needed, by Rod Story, is a challenge to teachers to step up to leadership roles. Being in a position to recruit and retain superior teachers who model creativity and innovation for the entire staff is an earned honor that



can greatly impact the entire school. The author offers specific strategies that work. He also demonstrates with humor that a school is a place of great fun and many small victories while it pursues a critical objective in our society--preparing every student for a productive role in society. He writes with humorous anecdotes but makes serious recommendations for what works in schools.

Rod Story is a former Connecticut administrator, having served as principal of Coginchaug and Nathan Hale Ray High Schools before retiring from Cromwell High School in 2002.

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Leadership, continued from page 1
 anxious to find new pedagogy, policies, and practices to improve academic performance. However, there might be a missing ingredient to the answer worth considering.

The answer just might be student leadership.

One of the most pernicious myths about student leadership is that it is reserved for only a very few. We've all been asked, "Are student leaders born or made?" The research is filled with evidence that student leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices. Interestingly, how many times have you been impressed by how 'ordinary' students end up leading their peers to achieve extraordinary things!

It happens because leadership is everyone's business.

The findings about student leadership suggest a direct correlation between increased test scores and the hours of involvement in co-curricular activities. Mora and Davilla examined data over a twelve year period while conducting a national educational longitudinal study that revealed student government participation in high school yielded increased college graduation results!

That's exactly why this year CSAC (Connecticut Student Activities Conference) set out to support our member's interest and growth in improving student leadership with a series of half-day workshops scheduled within the context of the already existing athletic leagues around the state. Nearly 1,000 student leaders participated in these workshops at Lewis Mills, Griswold, Masuk, and Manchester High Schools along with Wesleyan University and the New Haven Athletic Center. At the middle level, an additional 450 students participated in "Making Acceptance Acceptable", the annual middle school student leader conference at Quinnipiac University. And, not to be forgotten, an additional 450 elementary students descended on Asnuntuck and Naugatuck Community Colleges for a day of highly engaging, interactive leadership lessons put together by the CAS Elementary Leadership Committee.

One keynote presenter, Dr. Jim Fitzgerald, author of several books and articles on student leadership, said it best: "Imagine the impact when student leaders are equipped with a view of the future and a passion to make a difference. Nothing is more important than student leadership in any school setting. Every school can realize

great things through positive student leadership."

Griswold High School was proud to represent the Eastern Connecticut League and host the workshop on January 27th. Advisor Terry Cholewa noted, "It was an amazing experience for our students who have re-energized the student council at GHS this year. The breakout sessions provided them with great information that they can use throughout the school - community. The opportunity to meet student council members from other ECC schools gave them a new perspective and fresh ideas. But the experience of preparing, organizing, facilitating the day as the host school really jump started their leadership skills."

Kathi Walsh, principal of Preston Veterans Memorial School, summarized the workshop at Asnuntuck Community College stating that she was "so glad that the day was not just about eloquent speeches, though interesting". Rather, the real test of the half-day workshops is whether the students do what they say; whether words and deeds are consistent. Student leaders set an example in our schools by building commitment through simple, daily acts that create momentum. Walsh noted, "I was so very pleased with the enthusiasm and possibilities that students have to make something better than it is today."

Fitzgerald is well aware of the place and value of student activities, noting, "Schools and society today face real challenges. Wishful thinking would narrow the focus of student leadership to school dances, fundraisers, bake sales and other traditional school related concerns, but that is what it is - wishful thinking. Student leaders in 21st century schools live and operate in the real world. We must do everything we can to prepare them to do so, because the really good schools know what student leadership can do for the climate in a school."

As NASSP Executive Director, Gerald Tirozzi notes, "The question for secondary school leaders is not whether schools can afford to have student leadership programs, but whether they can afford not to have them." CAS concurs and strongly believes in the value of student leadership at all levels. Every student, every class, every grade, and every school benefits from positive student leadership.

Positive student leadership just might be one of the answers in the equation to reform our schools into high powered learning institutions.

OUTSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL FINE ARTS STUDENTS HONORED

By Dennis Carrithers, Ph.D., Assistant Executive Director



Keynote speaker Bill Thomson

The Fourteenth Annual CAS Recognition Banquet to honor Connecticut's outstanding high school visual and performing arts students was held April 8th at the Aqua Turf Club. Two hundred sixty-six students from 134 high schools received plaques signifying their accomplishments.

CAS President Everett Lyons opened the event with welcoming remarks. He noted how much the students being honored contributed in so many ways to their schools. In fact, he remarked that school leaders and teachers would have a hard time imagining their schools without the presence of these students and what they added to their schools.

Diane Smith, radio and television host, was the emcee for the evening and gave a context of the places and people in Connecticut that provide quality of life for Connecticut residents. Her "Positively Connecticut" outlook was a perfect perspective for honoring outstanding students.

Mr. William Thomson, a successful illustrator and artist, was the featured speaker. During his remarks, Mr. Thomson shared with the audience his creative process of moving from idea to finished illustration. He uses photographs taken around Connecticut and even of his own family to reference his drawings.

A resident of Southington, Connecticut, Mr. Thomson has illustrated several children books, including *Karate Hour*, *Building with Dad*, and *Baseball Hour*. Thomson was a finalist for the Connecticut Book Award for Children's Book Illustrator in 2005 and 2007.

Bill Thomson is an associate professor of illustration at the Hartford Art School at the University of Hartford where he received an Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award in 2004

The program has been sponsored since its inception by the Westfield Corporation, a leading international shopping center developer with interests in 121 shopping centers in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Westfield's three shopping locations are: Connecticut Post, Meriden and Trumbull. This year Jostens joined as co-sponsor.

Patrick Madden of Westfield Corporation announced that the Bruce Eagleson Scholarship Awards created in memory of Bruce Eagleson, a Westfield marketing vice president who helped originate the Arts Recognition Program, will be given out differently this year. All of the arts recipients are invited to demonstrate their accomplishments at one of the three Westfield centers. Center visitors will have a chance to vote on their favorites, and the top three students receiving votes will receive scholarships. Mr. Eagleson died on September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center.

The Connecticut High School Fine Arts Awards annually honors two outstanding seniors from each of the member schools in the state who excel in the performing or visual arts. They must possess the qualities of scholarship and leadership as well as excelling in the performing or visual arts.

Jostens, continued from page 1

Jostens delivers more than two million caps and gowns for students of all academic levels, as well as graduation announcements, diplomas and graduation memorabilia.

Along with its line of products and services, Jostens gives teachers and administrators new ways to connect with students. For example, *Jostens Renaissance* is a nationally recognized program that builds school pride and rewards academic excellence. Participating schools report rising grade point averages and high standardized scores, along with a drop in absenteeism, disciplinary problems and drop-out rates.

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Standing (left to right): Ryan Ford, Kevin Myjak, Richard Carpenter and Bob Sasena; Seated (left to right): Carina Alfano and Kate Toman

middle school news

A DIFFERENT MIDDLE LEVEL TEAM MEETING

By Jim Ellsworth & Robert C. Spear, Ed.D

It was Wednesday. Wednesday is curriculum day. It was a day to update each other about what we are each doing in our classrooms. The members of my sixth grade team, myself included, shuffled into the classroom where the six of us were to meet. I think we were all expecting to discuss ways to make connections among the current units of study in which we were all involved. However, something different happened that day.

A team member mentioned something about how subjective assessments can be at times. We spoke about report card grades, the project based assessments we give to students, how to set criteria on rubrics, and what role students should have in setting their own rubrics. A host of issues suddenly reared up. We all seemed to have somewhat different philosophies about grading, the importance of homework, the acceptance of late work, penalized or otherwise, and other issues relating to the assessment of students.

We had been planning more integrative units of study, but how would we assess students if each one of us was looking at assessment differently. A team member suggested that we take the time to probe more deeply into our thoughts on student assessment by reading a book or at least a chapter in a book that dealt with assessment.

The book that was agreed upon was *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know* by Dave Brown and Trudy Knowles. There is a chapter in the book that reviewed many key ideas related to assessment. We agreed that our team homework over April vacation would be to read this chapter and make notes on ideas that "spoke to us". Fortunately, our principal was able to purchase a copy of the book for each of us.

On returning from vacation, we set a day aside to focus on the book talk. We did not arrange ourselves around the usual table at which we sat for team meetings. Instead a team member suggested that we sit in chairs arranged in a circle. There was to be one extra empty chair placed in the circle. The person who had suggested the book agreed to be the facilitator. The rules were simple. No one would speak unless they

got up and moved to the empty chair. We agreed to keep our comments short and to the point, and to quote from the text whenever possible. We began by each moving to the chair to read the passage we had marked and to explain why the particular sentence or paragraph we had chosen had meaning for us.

From that moment on the team operated on a level we had not achieved in a long time. Everyone listened carefully to the person in the chair. This simple step prevented everyone from speaking at once, which is not an uncommon practice at our team meetings. We were very focused and listened intently to each other. We were having an in depth discussion on an issue important to us, using a text which was based on research and accepted best practices.

This "team meeting" stretched over six days. The ideas presented by Brown and Knowles provided much fuel for our discussion. For each of us the ideas presented by the authors partly confirmed and partly challenged our own practices. However, slowly we began to refine our thinking on assessment. Consensus was reached on several issues. A plan of action was beginning to emerge which would guide us in helping to achieve a greater level of student involvement in assessment. In short, the team went through a renewal and came away with a greater sense of focus on assessment. The book talk was so successful, it was suggested that we have these talks on a regular basis.

Do any of us find ourselves and our team bogged down with particulars, filling out forms, putting out fires? When do you find time to revisit those key issues relating to middle school philosophy that determine what you should be doing, and the manner in which you should be doing it? I have always felt it is wise to revisit the core ideas of middle school philosophy often. This re-examination of ideas serves to remind us of our ultimate goal, which is to do what is best for students.

Time together as a team is crucial however; I often feel it can be put to better use. The concerns noted above are important. Forms

must be completed. It is important that team members share insights and concerns about students. Issues present themselves that must be dealt with immediately. But why not set aside some days to talk about the big picture ideas like; your advisory program? Why do you have one? How is it running? Have you revisited the activities you do with students to see if they are accomplishing what was intended? Are you establishing a relationship with young adolescents? What is the focus of an advisory program?

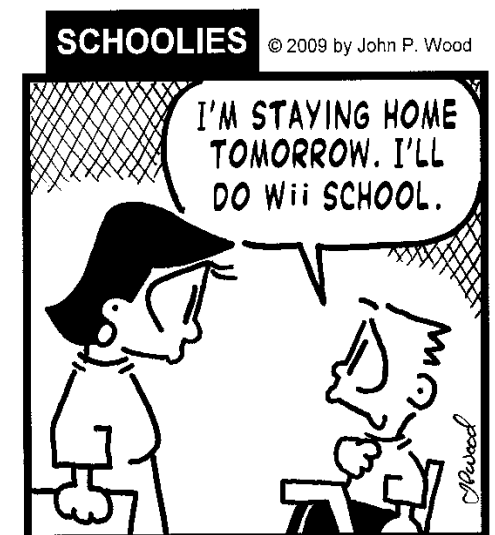
You might ask similar questions about integration, heterogeneous grouping, block scheduling, and a host of other topics that are important to schools that work well with young adolescents. Consider the following resources for a book/chapter talk with your team. See where it might lead you and why not consider having a "different team meeting" to see where it might lead you!

Brown, Dave F. and Trudy Knowles. *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*. 2nd edition, 2007

Wormeli, Rick. *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*, Stenhouse, 2008

- Jim Ellsworth is a teacher at the Scofield Magnet Middle School in Stamford, Connecticut and is a Board Member of NELMS.

- Robert C. Spear Ed.D. is the Executive Director of the New England League of Middle Schools, Topsfield, Massachusetts.



elementary school news

Marcia Elliott, *continued from page 1*

In her six years as an elementary school principal in Stafford, Marcia has been the driving force behind a number of successful programs. A partnership with the Hanson Initiative for Language and Literacy, which she introduced six years ago, has resulted in significant increases in CMT scores in reading and writing; as chair of the Stafford Early Education Council, she helped ensure the successful integration of the district-funded pre-kindergarten, Head Start, School Readiness and Family Resource Center programs into a seamless system of services for young families in the greater Stafford community; she established a number of activities which promote family literacy including *Raising Reader* workshops, family reading nights, and an at-home reading campaign; she implemented a creative block schedule which facilitates team teaching and differentiated instruction; and, she led her staff through a successful National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation process.

Marcia's successes as an administrator are largely tied to her collaborative approach to building leadership, which involves empowering her staff to be partners in the decision-making process and working side-by-side with them to develop and implement a vision for improved educational opportunities. Elliott has created an atmosphere of collegiality where all stakeholders – teachers, parents, and community members alike – feel valued, appreciated and engaged. Says first grade teacher Brandy Gadoury, "At West Stafford School, every voice counts and is valued."

One of Marcia's many strengths is her focus on data-driven decision making and her ability to use assessment data as a tool to accelerate student learning. She vigilantly keeps abreast of new research and emerging trends in education and is always presenting new information for the staff to consider and digest. Says Fishman, "Marcia is a leader who is always encouraging everyone to strive to continually learn and improve practice and who shows, by example, what that striving looks like."

All who work with Marcia agree that she is a thoroughly unselfish colleague who willingly goes out of her way to provide guidance and assistance to fellow educators. Town of Stafford Selectman Richard Dobson, Sr. describes Elliott as the "epitome of dedication." "She is always willing to share her expertise and time," says Dobson. "She has been a tireless worker seeking to improve the educational system, including the facilities and the programs."

Marcia has won the love and respect of staff, students, parents, and community members alike, all of whom agree that her every action is driven by her desire for improved educational opportunities for her students.

Marcia will be honored by CAS at the "Celebration of Distinguished Administrators" to be held in the fall at Saint Clements Castle in Portland. In October, she will travel to Washington, D.C. to participate in a two-day national recognition event along with National Distinguished Principals from each of the other forty-nine states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands.

NAESP CONVENTION IN NEW ORLEANS

By Regina Birdsell, Assistant Executive Director

NAESP's 88th Annual Convention & Exposition drew over 3,000 attendees from throughout the nation and overseas.

Educational consultant Ian Jukes delivered the opening general session address of NAESP's 2009 convention. During his presentation, entitled "Living on the Future Edge," Jukes spoke about change; specifically, technological change. His theme revolved around the premise that change is difficult and that we are experiencing change at an exponential rate.

Embedded in Jukes' remarks was the challenge to embrace this change and prepare for how principals will prepare our students. Underlining Jukes' presentation was the ideas that as educators most of us did not grow up with the technology with which so many of our students are familiar. That makes it difficult for us to understand and grasp the technological changes we are experiencing.

Jukes' presentation could only be described as fast-paced, laced with humor, and addressing serious issues facing educators charged with preparing students for a rapidly changing world. His points revolved around four global trends: Moore's Law, Photonics, the Internet, and "InfoWhelm."

Powell Calls on Educators to be "America's Promise" for Children

As Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.), stepped into the spotlight, principals and fellow educators were so awed that they awarded him a thunderous applause and a standing ovation, all for simply approaching the podium. The general tone saturating the room throughout Powell's presentation was one of pure American pride. As Powell spoke, his unwavering passion for advocating on behalf of the rights of children was obvious. "I want to see America invest much more in the educational system," he said. Powell shared his understanding of the work that good people do in schools today. He called for more resources and a commitment to making sure children are attached to schools and connected to great role models in their lives. Powell indicated that children need a non-negotiable expectation for success set by the adults who love them.

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Dr. Tony Recasner (center back), president of FirstLine Schools, took Connecticut delegates on a guided tour of three New Orleans schools. The CT delegation included Lou Pear, Regina Birdsell, Loraine Giannini, Eric Larson, Janice Harris and Norma Fisher-Doiron.

CT SUN HOSTS CIAC GIRLS BASKETBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP LUNCHEON



The Fairfield Warde Mustangs pose with the CT Sun mascot.



CT Sun's head coach, Mike Thibault, was the keynote speaker.



A crowd of roughly 200 packed into a ballroom at the Mohegan Sun Convention Center on March 18th for what has become one of the highlights of the winter sports season, the annual CIAC Girls' Basketball State Championship Luncheon.

Players and coaches from the eight girls' teams that played for the four CIAC Class championship games were all on hand for the event. One player from each team spoke during the luncheon.

"My team and I are extremely proud to be playing at Mohegan Sun," said Genevieve Barlow of nearby NFA. "The atmosphere the Mohegan Sun gives us is the bright lights. We get to have the fancy locker rooms and the professional atmosphere... Whether it's after a pasta party to come and hang out and have ice cream, or to come and see a Connecticut Sun game, the Mohegan Sun is definitely a part of our way of life, and we thank them for that."

Connecticut Sun coach Mike Thibault was the keynote speaker for the banquet, which was emceed by Fox 61 Sports Director Rich Coppola. Sun General Manager Chris Sienko provided the closing remarks. Mohegan Tribal Chairman Bruce "Two Dogs" Bozsum and Tribal Councilor Cheryl Todd were also on hand along with Sun CEO Mitchell Etes, COO Jeff Hartmann and President Paul Munick.

"We have been looking forward to

having this event here for quite some time," coach Thibault said. "I know efforts were made in the past, but when it finally came together, it was really exciting for us. I know you're excited to be here, but we're just as excited to have you."

Seinko closed the program by noting how much this event has grown.

"This is our fourth year hosting this event, and every year, it gets better," he said. "I think the most amazing thing out of all this is that in the next couple of days, all of you are going to have a chance to play on the same court where women's basketball legends have played. Rebecca Lobo, Cynthia Cooper, Diana Taurasi, Sue Bird, Lisa Leslie, Lindsay Whalen... the list goes on. When you're on that court, you'll be playing where professional athletes have played. Maybe someday, as Mike (Thibault) pointed out, you'll come back and play again."

The girls' luncheon is part of series of initiatives the Connecticut Sun has undertaken during the past few years to highlight local high school girls' basketball. The Sun also conducts a Team of the Week program during the regular high school season, recognizing the accomplishments of one school each week, and on Sunday, June 14th the Sun will honor the four CIAC Class champions - Norwich Free Academy, Hillhouse, Bacon Academy and Old Lyme - during half-time of a game against the Atlanta Dream at Mohegan Sun Arena.

Open Letter To Parents of Athletes

Ramblings from "The Sports Mama"

The following letter (edited for length) by The Sports Mama, an Arizona working mother who writes about parenting and sports, sends a powerful message about sportsmanship and the role parents play in either fostering or squashing it.

Dear parents of the kids on the team:

Hi. I'm pretty sure you all know me. I'm the coach's wife. But please, give me minute to reintroduce myself to you, ok?

I'm the woman who is married to the man who spends no less than 20 hours a week volunteering his time so that your child can experience something more of the sport than simply playing catch with you in the back yard when you have a few free minutes. I'm the woman who is married to the man who sometimes has to be reminded that he has his OWN children that he needs to direct some attention to, because he has a tendency to become wrapped up in creating as wonderful an experience as he can make this sport for YOUR child. I'm the woman who willingly gives her husband to your child, and the sport, for all those many hours each week.

I'm the woman who is the mother to one of those kids on that field. One of those kids who might possibly be more talented than your child; or he might be struggling. One of those kids who has other issues behind the scenes; issues that might possibly dictate occasional behaviors that you may witness. I'm the mother to one of those kids who rely on positive feedback and reinforcement, to encourage him to continue to make efforts to improve himself, his behaviors and his athletic abilities. I'm the mother who constantly tries to teach her child good sportsmanship above all else, and that winning -- while it is certainly a worthy goal -- is not the ONLY goal.

I'm the woman who not only willingly gives her husband to your child for several hours each week, but gives of her own time for at least 20 hours each week. I'm the woman who represents you on the Board of Directors. I'm the woman who works to ensure that we continue to have a good relationship with the town we play this sport in. I'm the woman who works to ensure that you don't have to pay increasingly exorbitant fees for your child to participate in this sport he loves. I'm the woman who occasionally has to miss watching her own children play, so that she can ensure you get to watch yours play.

All of that, and yet....

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sports news & notes

■ Masuk senior pitcher Rachele Fico broke the national high school record for career perfect games in softball with her 21st last month. It was her fifth perfect game of the season. The record of 20 was held by Marissa Marzan of Fresno, Calif. (1998-2001).

■ Amistad Academy in New Haven has been approved for CIAC membership and will be a member school starting in the fall. The school will have the following sports and is looking to fill schedules:

- Boys and Girls Cross Country
- Girls Volleyball
- Boys and Girls Basketball
- Boys and Girls Track
- Softball
- Baseball
- Lacrosse

If you have openings on schedules in any of these sports you can contact Jay Fellows at (203) 499-9470 or jayfellows@achievementfirst.org. If you schedule a game with Amistad, you can add them as an opponent via the non-member school pulldown menu. Their designation will automatically be changed to member school as of July 1.

■ An interesting case is pending in the Texas courts. The case stems from a collision between a wing official and an assistant coach during a high school football game in San Antonio, Texas. The coach, Terry English, was in the "officials' box" on the sidelines when the unfortunate accident took place. The official was properly running down the sideline to keep proper position in covering a play happening at that time. His attention was focused on that play. The official, Charlie Harpole, was knocked out but fortunately did not sustain serious, lasting injury. The coach, however, sustained permanent brain damage. His insurance company, Midwest Employers Casualty Company, in an effort to recoup expenses it has paid and continues to pay to cover Mr. English's medical treatment and care, sued the officiating crew. Midwest sued on the basis that coach English was not "warned" to stay out of the officials' box, that Harpole was not "looking where he was going," and that the crew did not enforce the sideline rule as it should have. The attorneys for the officiating crew successfully argued in trial court for summary judgment as a matter of law. Midwest did not accept that court ruling and appealed. The appeal is now pending.

ATTENTION: ATHLETIC DIRECTORS Eligibility Center Update

■ **Michaels Cup data available for review:** Data submitted at the CAAD Conference for the Michaels Cup has been uploaded to the eligibility center for review and editing. Via the Michaels Cup icon near the top of the eligibility center mainpage, you can review the information you submitted for accuracy and make any changes necessary. If you did not submit your information at the conference, you can do it online via the icon. A submission takes only a few minutes to complete; and it is important that the committee has information from all schools when determining the winners in each division.

■ **New information-sharing tool available for ADs:** We have added a new feature to the eligibility center which allows athletic directors to post requests for information that their colleagues can respond to; and the responses can include relevant files which can be uploaded directly to the website! Athletic

directors can submit a request for information, respond to an existing request, upload pertinent files or view existing responses via the new "Topics" icon near the top of the eligibility center mainpage. Athletic directors can also sign up to receive updates via e-mail when responses are posted on topics that interest them. We hope that over time we will build a library of information submitted directly by ADs and their colleagues that will be a valuable resource for our member school athletic directors.

■ **Testing dates will now be flagged:** Testing dates (SAT and ACT) have been added to the list of dates you will be notified about when setting or changing the date of a game on a schedule. As with the holiday date notifications, you will not be prevented from putting a game on those dates, we just want to be sure you are aware when a date may require special attention on your part.

Sports Mama, *continued from page 9*

I'm also the woman who is hurt, angry and disappointed. The woman who stands behind the stands at each game, listening to you. The woman who hears you belittle the kids on the field, constantly criticize each and every decision the coach makes, and make negative personal comments about certain individuals. The woman who reads the emails you send, attacking my child without knowing a single thing about him. The woman who wonders how you can feel qualified or justified in ANYTHING you are saying about the coach, any of the kids on the field, or any situation at all when you are never at a practice and only at games; never taking the opportunity to simply ASK the coach about something you may disagree with or wonder about.

Parents, this is just a game. Your child is not even in middle school yet, so to them it is still JUST A GAME that they play because they enjoy it. There is no way of knowing, at 10 and 11 years old, if your child is going to be the next big thing to hit the pros. Realistically, at least half of these kids won't even still be playing by the time they make it to the high school level, let alone anything beyond that. So why are you not taking the time now, when it counts and will stay with them, to teach them the value of good sportsmanship? The value of teamwork? The value of not believing that they are the superstar and everything revolves around them? Parents, you might not believe me when I say this, but your children emulate you. How you behave towards the game, the players, the coaches and the officials is exactly how they will behave as well.

Teach your children that the coaches are volunteering their time and should be respected for that. Teach your children that building up your teammates is the key to a good season. Teach your children that the official is human, too, and makes mistakes. Teach your children that they can always improve, and to always be looking for ways to do that. Teach your children to recognize that the ultimate goal of the game is not to win, but to be able to walk off the field knowing that you have given your absolute best and can be proud of that fact.

Athletic talent in each child is either there, or it isn't. You can't force a child to be something he isn't. So parents, teach your children to be good sports, and good people. For only then will they be a person you have created and shaped, and you will be able to be truly proud of them.

And then maybe everyone will be able to enjoy the games again.

Thank you,

Sportsmama

(http://youdonthavetolikeme.blogspot.com/2009_04_19_archive.html)

. . . more ciac news

“YOU HAD TO BE THERE!”

By Bob Deasy, Assistant Director of Unified Sports®

Please don't feel insulted by my saying, "You had to be there." But, you had to be there. It could have been any one of our eleven Unified Sports® basketball tournaments in twelve days during our school-based version of "March Madness."

The bell was ringing in back of the basket. "A little more to the left." "Stop." These were the guiding words a Special Partner was saying to her Special Athlete partner. The hands left her special walker, she received the basketball. Now her hands were raised in a perfect grip on the basketball. It left her finger tips, a perfect arch, swish. A common repetitive event on any basketball court except the shooter, is in part, visually impaired as a Special Partner on her level 5 Unified Sports® basketball team.

You had to be there to see the smile on her face.

The Special Partner/Special Athlete pair gave new meaning to a common basketball term, "fast break," as they ran/wheeled down the basketball court during their level 5 Unified Sports® basketball game. Once down the court, the shooter with the basketball firmly nestled in her lap, at the encouragement of the screaming crowd, slammed the ball through the tilted net. **You had to be there to see the grin on her face.**

He was led down the court by his Special Partner. It's not easy for him as his gait was less than what you would normally see on a basketball court approaching the basket. Once before the basket, he knew what to do with the ball. Not a slam dunk, but close! **You had to be there to see his determination.**

Sometimes she had to be coaxed to go in the right direction. Sometimes she needed the roar of the crowd to urge her on toward the basket. Once there, after looking around to see if you or anyone else was watching, she gently placed the basketball through the net. Then she clapped her hands. **You had to be there to see her self-approval.**

To me, Unified Sports® Level 5 basketball is the most fun to watch and enjoy. **But you have to be there to form your own opinion. See you there!**

April 2, 2009

Mr. Lou Pear
Director of Unified sports
CAS-CIAC
30 Realty Drive
Cheshire, CT 06410

Dear Mr. Pear,

On behalf of the members of the Board of Education I want to thank you and your staff for sponsoring the Unified Sports basketball championship at Bunnell High School on Thursday, March 12, 2009. Board of Education member, Joseph Dimenno, and Assistant Superintendent, Jeanne D'Angelo, brought back rave reviews of the event.

We are particularly grateful for the partnering approach you used to build the teams. This approach allowed the students to perform successfully on and off the court and receive the encouragement and support they needed for the success of this program.

We understand that our Bunnell student, who is normally confined to a wheelchair, walked to the basket (with assistance) and scored. How grateful we are that this event provided him the opportunity to participate as an athlete!

We also want to thank Athletic Director Dave Johnson, the staff, and the officials who volunteered their time to organize and run the event. We were pleased that other area high schools were also able to gather at Bunnell and participate.

Again, we thank you for sponsoring this event and allowing our students to participate.

Sincerely,

Irene Cornish
Superintendent of Schools

TITLE IX VIOLATIONS IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

■ A U.S. district court has ruled that the unequal participation opportunities in a California school district's athletic program violate Title IX. Female students at Castle Park High School (CPHS) sued Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD), alleging discrimination against female athletes in violation of Title IX in regard to practice and competitive facilities; locker rooms; training facilities; equipment and supplies; travel and transportation; coaches and coaching facilities; scheduling of games and practice times; publicity; and funding. They also alleged violation of Title IX based on unequal participation opportunities for females in athletic programs at CPHS. The court found that the school district failed all three of the tests for determining institutional compliance with Title IX that were set forth by the Office for Civil Rights' (OCR) in 1979.

■ The Ramona school district has been scrambling to find a way to pay almost \$325,000 in attorneys' fees and costs to Ramona High softball parents who sued in 2007 because boys had a better baseball facility, the San Diego Union-Tribune writes. The parents argued in their gender equity suit under the federal Title IX law that the girls' softball facilities were inferior to the boys' on-campus field. After a federal judge ordered the Ramona Unified School District to construct a new softball field in September 2007, the district spent about \$200,000 to make it similar in quality to the baseball facility, including a new scoreboard, sound system, and double-wide batting cage. Now the district is struggling to pay the plaintiffs' attorneys' fees and costs. Lawyers and experts say it's a cautionary tale for schools whose athletics facilities for girls aren't up to par with those for the boys.



. . . more ciac news

New Orleans, continued from page 8

"The success of children starts at home," Powell said. He passionately shared his belief in "lap top time," which he defined as time when a child sits on the lap of a loving adult, is held, read to, and taught the basics of life. Powell went on to remind the audience that not all children have an adult in their core family to provide this desperately needed nurturing, so schools need to provide substitute supports for children. "We need to be the simple human connection for children," he said. Every child deserves to be mentored, to be loved, and to be celebrated, Powell added.

Powell asked participants to embrace children in the following ways: be the role models of hope that children need; ensure that all children have a caring adult in their lives; provide safe places for children to connect to learning; be "America's Promise" for our children; and provide opportunities for children to give back and serve our communities.

Powell explained that too often children drop out of high school because during their elementary experiences support was lacking, causing them to begin to fail. A defeatist message internalizes, school feels too hard, and success is far-reaching. These children, Powell said, "start" to drop out of school long before their middle or high school experience. Thus, 12 years ago Powell initiated *America's Promise Alliance*, which is committed to the efforts of reducing dropout rates in America's schools.

The former secretary of state shared that throughout his remarkable career, seven schools across the country have been named in his honor. Among all of the awards bestowed upon him, Powell pointed out that these were the honors that are the most significant to him. "Nothing means more to me than to see my name on these schools."

Building Better Schools

Fifty elementary principals decked out in crimson T-shirts and white hats landscaped Ben Franklin

Elementary School and Eleanor McMann High School. They attacked the task resolute to beautify the two campuses damaged by Hurricane Katrina. The wheelbarrow team, rake and shovel brigades, assembly-line plant carriers, hole diggers, mulch spreaders, weed pullers—all found places and worked as a team. When tools were in short supply, they shifted focus and pitched in where help was needed. The foreman was amazed with their teamwork and speed.

Among these volunteers were Vicki Reed, principal from Highland School in Wallingford, and Lauren Elias, principal from B. W. Tinker School in Waterbury, who shared these thoughts on the day:

"It was an awesome day; one filled with camaraderie, team spirit and most importantly the pleasure of helping our New Orleans colleagues create inviting school environments."

- Victoria A. Reed

"It was such a great feeling to step back and look at the difference we had made not only to the school but to the community."

- Lauren Elias

Katrina Revisited - Connecticut donations made a difference

At the invitation of Dr. Tony Recasner, a former New Orleans principal and now president of FirstLine Schools, seven Connecticut educators visited three local schools that had been damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2006. This was a wonderful opportunity to see how schools were restored, refurbished and rebuilt with funds raised by Connecticut students immediately following the hurricane. Tony Recasner was a principal at the time of the hurricane. He had heartfelt appreciation for the Connecticut Association of Schools and the children of Connecticut. "When things were bleak as they could be, donations from Connecticut schools brought a glimmer of hope to the staff and students...better days were to come," said Dr. Recasner.

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