

THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS
The Sixty-First Annual Meeting
May 9, 2013

2012-2013 Annual Report
CONNECTICUT STUDENT ACTIVITIES CONFERENCE BOARD OF CONTROL
Submitted by Sally Biggs, Chair

The overall objective for CSAC this year was to link a broad range of activities to school climate initiatives and thus help our member schools develop and implement their school climate plans with a student driven focus.

Throughout 2012-13, CSAC continued to maintain its eye on the future potential growth of student activities across the state, as the board moved forward with a mixture of traditional activities as well as new initiatives. The following is a brief summary of CSAC initiatives for 2012-13. It must be noted that inclement weather had a profound effect on both the fall and winter programming. Every school experienced multiple closings as CT was hit with numerous storms this year.

□ Student Leadership Conferences

The first leadership conference, a three-day event at Stonehill College in July 2012, was a resounding success! Over 70 CT student leaders joined 250 other participants from several New England states for a conference that focused on the following curricular themes: respect, positive values, perspective, sportsmanship, teamwork, healthy lifestyles, community service and self-evaluation. These components were presented in small and large group sessions led by outstanding facilitators. The New England Student Leadership Conference, a joint effort from the New England state activity associations, is a staple event and will continue in the summer of 2013.

The Connecticut Association of Student Councils, led by newly appointed Executive Director Jennifer Buckley, kicked off the year by sponsoring an advisors' workshop – during "High School Leadership Week" – November 1-8, 2012. Attorney Julie Fay was the keynote speaker. She provided a legal update for advisors that featured all important do's and don'ts as far as student and parent rights. Fay's presentation also highlighted matters pertaining to building a positive school climate through student activities.

CASC also partnered with Aetna in Hartford for a November 14 Fall Leadership Conference that attracted a huge number of student councils who came to hear the newly appointed director of student activities at NASSP, Ann Postlewaite. Postlewaite also facilitated a workshop on November 16th for SWC and FCIAC student councils at Newtown High School. The BIG EVENT - the annual spring conference on March 15 & 16, 2013 at Wesleyan University - drew an enthusiastic audience of over 225 student council members to hear Aric Jackson, The Dream Achiever, keynote the first day of the conference.

CASC continued with its "leadership curriculum", a four year program for both student leaders and advisors featuring essential questions and activities embedded in the conferences. For the 2012-13 year, we explored the essential questions: *"I am a leader, so now what is right? As a leader, how do I work with in my group?"*

The Elementary Student Leadership conferences were held for the 20th consecutive year at Sacred Heart University, Asnuntuck, Three Rivers, and Naugatuck Community Colleges. In total, the four conferences enrolled more than 800 students! Co-Chairs Karen Brimecombe, Lauren Elias, Mary Giard, and Eileen Roxbee coordinated the programs that featured teacher volunteers along with high school student leaders from across the state providing highly interactive leadership activities for students in grades four through six. Once again, the leadership skills of productive thinking, decision making, communication, and collaboration were featured at each conference.

Future student leadership initiatives and conferences will be aligned to the curricular modules of service, ethics, decision making, team building and communication that are part of the newly developed and approved leadership curriculum. CSAC also worked closely with the CIAC Sportsmanship Committee at the November 15th annual statewide conference for athletic leaders.

❑ 1st Annual Health & Wellness Summit

CSAC, in partnership with CTSDE, sponsored the First Annual Health & Wellness Summit on September 27th. Under the theme of “positive approaches to improving the social, emotional, and physical development of students,” the conference helped schools play a more active role in this important area as well as designing and developing student success plans, a new initiative for grades 6-12 this year. CAS Executive Director Dr. Karissa Neihoff was the keynote presenter. In a unique “twist” to traditional conference formats, the event was designed for faculty and student teams. By all accounts, the first summit was a huge success. The second summit is already set for October 10, 2013.

❑ KIDSMARATHON

Working with the Rod Dixon Foundation in Los Angeles, CSAC put together our Connecticut version of KIDSMARATHON, an amazing life fitness program for students ages 7-12 that features an 8-10 week program of running with nutritional guidelines. Final celebrations are set for late spring at Cheshire, Litchfield, Danbury, Waterbury and Norwich sites as over 2,500 runners are expected to complete the last mile of their marathon in front of cheering family and friends. For the 5th consecutive year, this represents a substantial increase in participation! KIDSMARATHON is very fortunate to have received corporate sponsorship from Aetna and Sodexo Foods. We posted a short documentary video on the CAS website that provides prospective schools with an overview of the program. The prospects for KIDSMARATHON, aligned with First Lady Michelle O’Bama’s “Let’s Move Campaign”, continue to be a source of pride for the Connecticut Association of Schools.

❑ Dance Championships

The 7th annual state dance championship was held at Newtown High School on February 23rd. A record number of dance team entries competed in the event witnessed by a standing room only crowd. The choreography, costumes, music and synchronization delighted all in attendance at this popular event. Teams were crowned champs in the hip hop, jazz, kick and pom categories. Most impressive was the display of cheering and sportsmanship by all the teams for one another. Dance coaches were treated to a clinic last fall which provided excellent background information on the NFHS spirit rules. Tournament chair, Kathy Swillinger, did a superb job with the arrangements. Swillinger was named tournament director of the first New England Dance Championship this past March, which saw Hamden and Branford HS teams crowned champs!

❑ Cheerleading

Kudos to the Cheer Committee, led by tournament director Sherrie Zemruski, for another outstanding year of regional competitions leading up to the state championship at the New Haven Athletic Center on March 8 and 9. Nearly 100 schools participated in the competition which drew the largest, most spirited crowds in history. Champions were crowned in the small, medium, large and co-ed school divisions. Connecticut high school cheerleaders also represented the state in fine fashion at the New England championships held at Lawrence High School, Lawrence, MA on March 15th.

❑ Robotics

CSAC continued its partnership with CT First, an organization that sponsors Robotics Tournaments for elementary, middle and high school teams. We will host the first ever Connecticut Robotics Championship for high school teams on May 11, 2013 at the Hartford Armory, sponsored by the Northeast Utilities Foundation. Our goal is to inspire in students an appreciation of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and to show them how an understanding of these fields can enrich their lives. The prospects for this partnership are limitless as students build not only science and technology skills, but also self-confidence, leadership, and life skills. The armory is going to rock on May 11th as we expect over 30 teams to compete in several rounds of competition leading to the final four!

❑ Debate

Under the direction of chair Everett Rutan, the Connecticut Debate Association had a terrific year. A special program for novice teams was held at Farmington High School on October 13th. Seven regional extemporaneous debates were held in 2012-13 leading up to the state championships at Wilton High School on March 22th. Each regional tournament averaged over 28 schools and 275 students participating in each tournament! This represents an all-time record number of debaters! Of all the student activities in our schools debating remains the “highest of the higher order thinking skills” activity!

❑ CAS-CIAC Endowment & Thomas Flanagan Student Activity Awards

2013 saw the Flanagan Grant Program merge with the new CAS-CIAC Endowment Grants. Through the generosity of our many sponsors, the CSAC board was able to announce that \$50,000 has been set aside to recognize and honor the “best of the best student activities” The grants may be used to expand existing programs in new or innovative ways or develop other worthy projects or programs. CSAC board members will announce the 2013 grant winners at the CAS annual meeting on May 9th.

❑ **State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE)**

The 2012-13 State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE) consisted of twenty six high school students who met regularly with Stephan Pryor, Commissioner of Education, and CAS Assistant Executive Director Dave Maloney. The SSACE spent this year researching three tasks: how to include student feedback in the newly developed administrator evaluation instrument; how to attract high school students into the teaching profession; and how to improve communications to parents and community members. SSACE also selected the recipients of the Governor's Challenge to Citizenship Awards that are an annual recognition of school / community service projects. In addition, the students assisted with the design and implementation of the Student & Faculty Newtown Tribute, an outreach effort involving all schools throughout CT in a positive, collaborative response to the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

❑ **The Governor's Scholars Committee**

Chaired by Rita McDougald-Campbell, assistant principal at Trumbull High School, the committee annually designates Connecticut's finest junior year students as *Governors' Scholars*. Formed seventeen years ago at the urging of then Commissioner of Education Ted Sergi, each school nominee receives a Governor's Scholars certificate from CAS and the thirty finalists are celebrated in May at the Governor's Scholars Luncheon. Finalists receive monetary stipends, plaques and the opportunity to take free courses at thirty-three Connecticut colleges and universities. The University of Connecticut offers each scholar who matriculates there a scholarship valued at half tuition for four years.

❑ **The Arts Committee**

Chaired by Maureen Berescik, director of Arts for the Bethel Public Schools, this committee annually plans the high school arts banquet recognizing two outstanding arts students from each high school. Over one hundred and forty high schools were represented this year! Once again, the arts committee was very pleased to have Jostens as its corporate sponsor.

❑ **The Connecticut Association of National Honor Societies**

Under the direction of Don Gates, executive director, CANHS continued with its main goal of developing and providing supportive initiatives for NHS chapter member schools. This year's featured initiative was linked to the amendments to the bullying legislation. On May 20th, CANHS will host its annual spring conference for all middle and high school chapters of the National Honor Society. Honor Society chapters that have exhibited exemplary service programs will receive special recognition at the conference. Additional conference activities will include sharing of 'best practices' at roundtables which will offer chapter members innovative ways to serve their greater school communities with positive action plans toward building positive school climates.

❑ **Unified Theater**

CSAC continued its support for Michaela Connery, executive director of Unified Theater, in promoting this amazing program! Unified Theater harnesses the energy of high school student leaders with the power of performances that feature music, acting, and dance. Whether a student is the next Broadway sensation or a neophyte in theater, the program is all about letting students experience the thrill of true inclusion in a cooperative fashion. Students take the lead as directors, writers, lighting chiefs, actors, choreographers, musicians, and stage managers. In short, Unified Theater is all about true inclusion through the arts and holds great promise as a future student activity program throughout Connecticut's middle and high schools.

❑ **BandJam**

The statewide "ultimate battle of the bands" is set to take place at Griswold High School on May 17th. BandJam is for high school student "rock" or "garage" bands who simply love to play their music. The bands are treated like rock stars at the event and the prizes are superb! Thanks to Rick Sadlon, Darien High, and Ross Sward, NFA, for their special efforts in making this event happen!

❑ **Geno's Reading Team**

Geno's Reading Team returned for the 2012-13 school year! Despite their busy schedules and the numerous demands on their time, the UCONN women's basketball players did produce videos of their favorite books while attending summer classes. CSAC is really excited to have the UCONN Huskies partner with this awesome reading program that focuses on an essential skill – reading - for enjoyment. We look forward to improving the program during the summer session in June, well ahead of our launch date in October 2013 .