

# THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

## *The Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting*

May 12, 2011

2010-2011 Annual Report

### CONNECTICUT STUDENT ACTIVITIES CONFERENCE BOARD OF CONTROL

*Submitted by Sally Biggs, Chair*

The Connecticut Student Activities Conference oversaw an expanding number of activities during the 2010-11 academic year, fulfilling its mission of meeting the evolving needs of non-athletic student activities throughout our member schools. With its eye on the future potential growth of student activities across the state, the board moved forward with a mixture of the old, as well as new initiatives, for students to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership skills in service to their respective school / communities. The following is a brief summary of CSAC initiatives for 10-11:

• **Student Leadership Conferences:** The Connecticut Association of Student Councils, led by Executive Director Sarah Jones, Manchester High School, sponsored five half-day workshops – billed during “high school leadership week” – November 1-5, 2010. The half-day workshops were planned in conjunction with the Berkshire, Southwest, Eastern, Southern and Central Connecticut Athletic Conferences. Lewis Mills, Bethel, Newington, Griswold, and Hillhouse High Schools hosted the programs that featured amazing speakers and break-outs that explored the themes of 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership skills. Additionally, CASC sponsored the popular spring conference on March 18, 2011 at Wesleyan University. Close to 2000 student leaders participated in these workshops! A summer leadership camp opportunity with specific activities linked to 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership skills is planned for Connecticut high school student leaders at Stonehill College, MA, from July 21-24, 2011. This event is being coordinated in association with the members of the New England State Associations of the NFHS.

CASC also drafted a “leadership curriculum”, a four year program for both student leaders and advisors featuring essential questions and activities. For the 2010-11 academic year we explored the essential question: *I am a leader, so now what?*

The Elementary Student Leadership conferences were held for the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year at Asnuntuck, Three Rivers and Naugatuck Community Colleges. In total, the three conferences enrolled more than 600 students, setting a new all-time high. Co-Chairs Karen Brimecombe, Lauren Elias and Chris Pomroy coordinated the programs that featured teacher volunteers from across the state providing highly interactive leadership activities for students in grades four through six.

CSAC was joined by the Connecticut Association of National Honor Societies and hosted a student activity advisors workshop on October 4 that provided faculty advisors with a toolkit of ideas and strategies to jump start their programs for the new academic year. The featured keynote session was led by Attorney Julie Fay, who explored the legal ramifications for advisors in the digital / social networking age that we all find ourselves immersed in!

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 curriculum written by Sarah Jones and advisory board members Arlene Salvati and Joyce Niestemski. It is also anticipated that the goals and objectives of the CIAC Sportsmanship Committee will be linked to future leadership conferences.

• **KiDSMARATHON:** Working with the Rod Dixon Foundation in Los Angeles, CA, 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 later this spring at Cheshire, Fairfield, Litchfield and Norwich as over 1,500 runners are set to complete their last mile in a marathon before cheering family and friends. This represents a 50% increase in participants from last year. KiDSMARATHON is very fortunate to have received corporate sponsorship from Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield and Sodexo Foods. The prospects for this initiative, 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 5<sup>th</sup> annual state dance championship was held at Hamden High School on March 5th. 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.

• **Cheerleading:** Kudos to the Cheer Committee, chaired by Jackie Sullivan, for another outstanding year of regional competitions leading up to the state championship at the New Haven Athletic Center on March 11 and 12. More than 100 schools participated in the competition which drew large, spirited crowds on both dates. Champions were crowned in the small, medium, large and co-ed

school divisions. Connecticut High School Cheerleading also represented the state in fine fashion at the New England championships held at the Providence Athletic Center on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

- **Robotics:** CSAC continued its partnership with CT First, an organization that sponsors Robotics Tournaments for elementary, middle and high school teams. CT First's 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.
- **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 Wethersfield High School on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Six regional extemporaneous debates were held in 2010-11 leading up to the state championships at Wilton High School on March 26<sup>th</sup>. Each regional tournament averaged over 25 schools and 250 students participating in each tournament! This represents an all-time record number of debaters! A fall workshop was held at CAS in an effort to recruit interested schools to get on board with this "higher order thinking skill" activity!
- **Geno's Reading Team:** This fall over 45 elementary schools signed up with Coach Geno Auriemma's Reading Team, a program designed to encourage students to read at least 20 minutes daily. The CAS Elementary Board developed a syllabus of books that were jointly read by the UCONN Women's Basketball Team and elementary students. All members of the UCONN Huskies posted videos on the CAS website for the teachers and students to view. Coach Auriemma invited all the schools to attend a pep rally that focused on *reading – that's right - an academic pep rally!* Over 500 student members of "Geno's Reading Team" attended the pep rally and had a blast. Adding to the spirited occasion was a performance by the Canton Intermediate School jazz band!
- **Thomas Flanagan Student Activity Awards:** In spite of the loss of the sponsor who provided *grant* awards, the CSAC Board modified the program and offered member schools with an opportunity to *recognize* their top student activities. CSAC board members plan to make on-site presentations this June to elementary, middle and high schools who were selected for their significant contribution to their school / community through exemplary student activities.
- **State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE):** The 2010-11 edition of the State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE) consisted of twenty five high school students who met regularly with George Coleman, the Interim Commissioner of Education. The SSACE number one project this year produced a template for member schools to follow concerning the selection of student representation to the state governance council's, a new program that went into effect in January 2011. SSACE also selected the recipients of the Governor's Challenge to Citizenship Awards that are an annual recognition of school / community service projects. SSACE students presented their findings and experiences on school climate issues at the annual CAS Fall Conference in October and the Data Showcase Conference in April.
- **The Governor's Scholars Committee:** Chaired by Dr. Robert Eberle, Principal of Wolcott High School, the committee annually designates Connecticut's finest junior year students as *Governors' Scholars*. Formed fifteen years ago at the urging of then Commissioner of Education Ted Sergi, the program has been sponsored for the past ten years by Big Y World Class markets. Each selected 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:** Co-chaired by Maureen Berescik, Director of Arts for the Bethel Public Schools and Laura Ferrante-Fernandes, retired Assistant Principal, Jockey Hollow Middle School, this committee annually plans the high school arts banquet recognizing two outstanding arts students from each high school. One hundred and forty high schools were represented this year, an increase from the previous year. The arts committee is very pleased to have Josten's as a 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 "intergenerational activities" for senior citizens and residents in convalescent homes. On May 16<sup>th</sup> 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 efforts to support the elderly 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.
- **Unified Theater:** CSAC assisted Michaela Connery, Executive Director of Unified Theater, in securing a planning grant of \$59,000 from Americorps which has spearheaded future planning by CAS and Unified Theater to offer this exciting student activity to our member schools. 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 neophyte in stage 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 organization throughout Connecticut's middle and high schools.