

THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

The Sixtieth Annual Meeting

May 10, 2012

2011-2012 Annual Report

CONNECTICUT STUDENT ACTIVITIES CONFERENCE BOARD OF CONTROL

Submitted by Sally Biggs, Chair

For the third consecutive year, the Connecticut Student Activities Conference saw participation rates in its programs increase during 2011-12! With its eye on the future potential growth of student activities across the state, the board moved forward with a mixture of traditional activities, as well as new initiatives. The board updated its by-laws by making minor changes which will facilitate its operations for the foreseeable future. The overall objective for CSAC this year was to link activities to school climate initiatives and thus help our member schools develop their school climate plans. The following is a brief summary of CSAC initiatives for 2011-12.

Student Leadership Conferences

The Connecticut Association of Student Councils, led by Executive Director Sarah Jones, Manchester High School, sponsored three half-day workshops – during “High School Leadership Week” – November 7-9, 2011. The half-day workshops were planned in conjunction with the Berkshire, Southwest, Eastern, Shoreline, Southern and Central Connecticut Athletic Conferences. Bethel, Bolton, and Griswold High Schools hosted the programs that featured amazing speakers and break-outs that explored the themes of 21st century leadership skills. Additionally, CASAC sponsored the annual spring conference on March 16 & 17, 2012 at Wesleyan University. Close to 1100 student leaders participated in these workshops! A summer leadership camp opportunity, in conjunction with the New England region, with specific activities linked to 21st century leadership skills, is planned for Connecticut high school student leaders at Stonehill College, MA, from July 19-22, 2012. CSAC will utilize participants in this event as ambassadors to assist with planning CASCIAC events for 2012-13.

CASAC has also drafted and implemented a “leadership curriculum”, a four year program for both student leaders and advisors featuring essential questions and activities. For the 2011-12 academic year we explored the essential question: *“I am a leader, so now what are my responsibilities?”*

CSAC was joined by the Connecticut Association of National Honor Societies to co- host an advisors workshop on October 3rd that provided participants 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! Fay’s presentation also highlighted matters pertaining to building a positive school climate through student activities.

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, providing a breakout session at the September 22nd annual statewide conference.

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 later this spring at Cheshire, Fairfield, Litchfield, Danbury and Norwich as over 2,000 runners are set to complete their last mile in a marathon before cheering family and friends. This represents a substantial increase in participants from last year. KiDSMARATHON is very fortunate to have received corporate sponsorship from Anthem and Sodexo Foods. KiDSMARATHON produced a short documentary video that provides prospective schools with an overview of the program. We also applied for a grant from the “Active Schools Program” in early April. 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 6th annual state dance championship was held at Hamden High School on March 3rd. 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.

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 9 and 10. 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 Lawrence High School, Lawrence, MA on March 17th. Tournament chair, Sherrie Zembruski, did her usual excellent job with the arrangements.

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 Pomperaug High School on October 1st. Seven regional extemporaneous debates were held in 2011-12 leading up to the state championships at Wilton High School on March 24th. Each regional tournament averaged over 25 schools and 265 students participating in each tournament! This represents an all-time record number of debaters! An exhibition for middle school debaters was held at Trinity College on March 22nd in an effort to promote debating in middle schools! Of all the student activities in our schools debating remains the "highest of the higher order thinking skill" activity!

Thomas Flanagan Student Activity Awards

Through a generous sponsorship from EMPOWER, a company that offers leadership training, the CSAC Board was able to bring back the financial backing for the Thomas Flanagan Awards. \$4,000 has been set aside to recognize and honor the "best of the best student activities." CSAC board members will announce the winners of the Flanagan Student Activity Awards on May 18th at a press conference/media event.

State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE)

The 2011-12 State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE) consisted of twenty two high school students who met regularly with Stephan Pryor, Commissioner of Education. The SSACE's number one project this year was to produce a presentation for the State Board of Education entitled, "21st Century Learning Skills: A Decade Later." SSACE also selected the recipients of the Governor's Challenge to Citizenship Awards that are an annual recognition of school/community service projects.

The Governor's Scholars Committee

Chaired by Dr. Robert Eberle, assistant superintendent of the Wolcott Public Schools, the committee annually designates Connecticut's finest junior year students as *Governors' Scholars*. Formed sixteen years ago at the urging of then Commissioner of Education Ted Sergi, the program has been sponsored for the past eleven years by Big Y World Class markets. Each selected school nominee receives a Governor's Scholar 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, an increase from the previous 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 21st, 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 assisted Michaela Connery, executive director of Unified Theater, in implementing 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 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 for more Connecticut's middle and high schools.

BandJam

The statewide "ultimate battle of the bands" took place at NFA on May 4th and will take place in Darien on May 11th. 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 will be back for the 2012-13 school year! Regretfully, the UCONN women's basketball team's busy schedule and the increasing demands placed upon the coaches and players prevented the program this year. CSAC is really excited to prepare an awesome reading program with the players for next year. We will complete the program during the summer session of UCONN classes, well ahead of our launch date in October.