

THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

The 62nd Annual Meeting

2013-2014 Annual Report CONNECTICUT STUDENT ACTIVITIES CONFERENCE BOARD OF CONTROL *Submitted by Sally Biggs, Chair*

For the fourth consecutive year, the Connecticut Student Activities Conference saw participation rates in its programs increase during 2013-14! In spite of the internal pressures on classrooms at all levels and the difficult weather that impacted schedules, this is a pleasant surprise! CSAC has been focusing on building student activity program across the state. This year was no exception, as the board moved forward with a mixture of traditional activities, as well as new initiatives. 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. Thematically, our curriculum this year was built around the essential question: "I'm a leader, so now what do I do?"

The following is a brief summary of CSAC initiatives for 2013-14:

□ Student Leadership Conferences

The Connecticut Association of Student Councils, led by Executive Director Jennifer Buckley, revised the 2013-14 calendar of activities by "front loading" the important programs to the Fall and following up with regional workshops in the Spring. Kicking off the line-up was the annual workshop for advisors in October that featured NASSP Director of Student Activities, Anne Postlewaite as the key note presenter. Working with the expanded advisory board that increased membership by over 100% from last year, Buckley orchestrated a Fall state conference in November. Hosted by the Waterbury Arts Magnet High School, the two day event featured amazing speakers and break-outs that explored the themes of 21st century leadership skills. In conjunction with the state conference, CASC sponsored a Y.E.S. for Diversity seminar at Kaynor Tech High School featuring the amazing "Dream Achiever", Aric Jackson. Rounding out the Spring program was a student led workshop by the Center For Youth Leadership from Brien McMahon High School (Norwalk). CASC also spearheaded the use of social media, video, and the newly designed CAS website to launch all of its programs this year!

A summer leadership conference, in conjunction with the New England region, will offer CT student leaders a chance to improve their leadership skills at Stonehill College, MA, this July. CSAC will utilize participants in this event as ambassadors to assist with planning CASCIAC events for 2014-15.

The Elementary Student Leadership conferences were held for the 21st consecutive year at Sacred Heart University, Asnuntuck, Three Rivers, and Naugatuck Community Colleges. In total, the four conferences enrolled more than 850 students, which is an excellent response. Co-Chairs Karen Brimecombe, Lauren Elias, Mary Giard, and Eileen Roxbee coordinated the programs that featured teacher volunteers from across the state providing highly interactive leadership activities for students in grades four through six. The breakout sessions targeted productive thinking, communication, problem solving and decision making skills.

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 four year leadership curriculum. CSAC also worked closely with the CIAC Sportsmanship Committee, providing breakout sessions and arranging the key note address at the November 21st 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, Waterbury, Litchfield, Danbury and Norwich as over 4,000 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 Sodexo Foods. To help advertise the program KiDSMARATHON has produced a three minute documentary video that provides prospective schools with an overview of the program. We also assisted Waterbury in applying for a \$120,000 grant which has been awarded to the city! The prospects for KIDSMARATHON, aligned with First Lady Michelle O'Bama's

“Let’s Move Campaign”, and Governor Malloy’s Child Obesity Program, continue to be a source of pride for the Connecticut Association of Schools.

❑ **Dance Championships**

The 8th annual state dance championship was held at Hamden High School on February 22nd. 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 Glenn Lungarini, Principal of Seymour High School, for another outstanding year of regional competitions leading up to the state championship at the New Haven Athletic Center on March 7 and 8. 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. A unified cheerleading exhibition was added to the competition this year which proved to be very “special”. 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 22nd. 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 vision we have for this partnership is limitless as students build not only science and technology skills, but also self-confidence, leadership, and life skills. The CT High School Robotics Championship is set for May 17th at Haddam Killingworth High School. We expect that close to 40 teams will compete for the coveted state robotics champion.

❑ **Debate**

Under the direction of chair, Everett Rutan, the Connecticut Debate Association had a record year as far as participation in tournaments! A special program for novice teams was held at Xavier High School on September 28th. Seven regional extemporaneous debates were held in 2013-14 leading up to the state championships at Wilton High School on March 22nd. Each regional tournament averaged over 27 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 skill” activity!

❑ **Thomas Flanagan / CAS-CIAC Endowment Grant Awards**

Through the generous sponsorship from many corporate partners, the CAS-CIAC / Flanagan Endowment Awards will award approximately \$35,000 to member school applicants this May. The RFP provides funding to new or existing programs that are educationally sound initiatives in support of a high level of learning. The CSAC board screens, selects, and announces the winners at the annual meeting. We received more than 60 applications for this program. CSAC Board members and CAS central office staff will make the presentations to individual schools at local ceremonies in late May.

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

The 2013-14 edition of the State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE) consisted of twenty five high school students who met regularly with Stephan Pryor, Commissioner of Education. The SSACE number one project this year was to produce a presentation for the State Board of Education which will center on three topics: what can students do to improve school climate, what have students experienced with the implementation of the common core standards and what motivates students to want to succeed? 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 Rita McDougald-Campbell, Assistant Principal at Trumbull High School, 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 is a first-class recognition for the top junior scholars in our member schools. 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 will receive a plaque 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-nine high schools were represented this year, an increase from the previous year. An added announcement was the recipient of the inaugural "Heart of the Arts" award given to a student who exemplifies the ideals of the positive heart of the arts that represent the core mission of the fine and practical arts. Richelle Villabona, from North Haven High School, was the recipient. Once again, the arts committee was very pleased to have Josten's 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 what chapters might do in service to their communities by creating positive school climates of respect. On May 23rd 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. In lieu of a single key note presentation, the committee is planning on a student led panel that will spotlight "proven student led activities that have a difference"!

□ Geno's Reading Team

Geno's Reading Team will be back for the 2014-15 school year! Regretfully, the UCONN women's basketball schedule and incredibly busy 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.

We did invite All-American Stefanie Dolson to an assembly to share her story about her elementary experiences being so tall, overweight, and shy as a result of being teased.