

THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS
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2016-2017 Annual Report
CSAC BOARD OF CONTROL
Submitted by Paul G. Cavaliere, Jr., Chair

For the eighth consecutive year, the Connecticut Student Activities Conference saw participation rates in many of its programs sell out during 2016-17! In spite of the internal pressures within classrooms at the school level, and the favorable winter weather, this was, indeed, a pleasant surprise! CSAC has been focusing on building student activity program across the state at all three levels – elementary, middle and high. 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 in 2016-17 was to link activities to 21st century leadership skills, diversity awareness, and school climate initiatives. 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 2016-17:

Student Leadership Conferences

The Connecticut Association of Student Councils, led by Assistant Director of Student Activities, Jennifer Buckley, revised the 2016-17 calendar of activities by “front loading” the important programs to the fall and following up with state-wide activities in the spring. Working with the expanded faculty and student advisory board that increased membership significantly from last year, Buckley moved the fall state-wide conference from November to March. Students were challenged to find what sparks their passion and then in turn reach out and spark the passion in someone else. They were asked to look beyond resumé builders and prestige positions to making room for everyone’s voice and leading and living life based on authenticity, openness and service to others.

Rounding out the fall programs was a new program: *Converge 2016: A Conference For Young Women of Color* (see additional details herein). This program exceeded expectations in terms of participation and evaluation. CASC also spearheaded the use of social media and continued to update the CAS website to launch all of its programs this year! This is a work in progress and targeted for more revisions in 2017-18.

Two summer leadership conferences are planned for July 2017. The first will offer CT student leaders a chance to improve their leadership skills at Worcester State University, MA. A second, national student leadership event sponsored by NFHS at the headquarters in Indiana will conclude our expanded summer programs. CSAC will utilize participants in these events as ambassadors to assist with planning CAS-CIAC events for 2017-18.

The Elementary Student Leadership conferences were held for the 24th consecutive year at four college sites: Sacred Heart University, Asnuntuck, Three Rivers, and Naugatuck Community Colleges. In total, the four conferences enrolled more than 975 students, selling out each site!!! Co-chairs Karen Brimecombe, Bob Garry, 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 developed 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, diversity, team building, and communication that are part of the newly developed and approved four-year student leadership curriculum. Additionally, a leadership conference for students in grades 2 & 3 will be developed and implemented by the elementary leadership committee for next Fall.

A Diversity Focus

CSAC continued with its focused effort to develop leadership skills with diversity initiatives. We developed three well attended programs. The first, “Diversity In Action,” was hosted by the Diversity Team at North Haven High School in October. Organized for and run by students, the day featured a series of breakout sessions with the overarching

goal for students to develop a better understanding acceptance of others. The day was also an “open house” for participants to visit North Haven’s Diversity Day program!

B.O.T.F. Competition

BOTF stands for Battle of the Fans, a video-based school spirit competition designed to find the CT high school with the very best examples of spirit and sportsmanship. Modeled after the Michigan program, CSAC sponsored our version for 2017-18 at the CIAC Sportsmanship Conference in November. One school, an entry from Notre Dame High School, stood out above the others. A news release, featuring a video of the Notre Dame production team, was prepared by CIAC staff member, Joel Cookson, and posted on our site during the state basketball tourney. The BOFT Award was presented to Notre Dame at the Mohegan Sun Arena before a huge crowd during the state basketball championship weekend.

KiDSMARATHON

Working with the Rod Dixon Foundation in Los Angeles, CSAC sponsored KiDSMARATHON for the eighth consecutive year. KiDSMARATHON is an amazing life fitness program for students ages 7-12 that features an 8-10 week program of running with nutritional guidelines. Final celebrations have been increased to *nine* sites for 2017! The line-up includes Cheshire, Waterbury, Torrington, Danbury, EO Smith, Trumbull, Branford, Glastonbury and East Lyme as over 4,500 runners are scheduled to complete the last mile of their marathon before cheering family and friends. To help advertise and market the program, KiDSMARATHON has produced two, three-minute documentary videos that provide prospective schools with an overview of the program. The prospects for KiDSMARATHON, aligned with former 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. CSAC also offered an “Active Schools” professional development program for PE/Health Teachers in conjunction with KiDSMARATHON that featured an exercise video produced by the UCONN Women’s Basketball Team!

Dance Championships

The 11th annual state dance championship was held at Shelton High School on February 25th. A record number of dance team entries – over 50 - 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. CT dance teams were well represented at the New England Regional Competition on March 4th at Enfield High School, CT. 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 Pomperaug High School, for another outstanding year of regional competitions leading up to the state championship at the New Haven Athletic Center on March 4 and 5. 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 which proved to be very special. 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 18th. Tournament chair Sherrie Zembrzuski and a large cadre of cheer coaches did their 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 was held on May 13th at Guilford High School. Thirty-five teams competed for the coveted title of 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! Kicking off the year for CDA was a special program for novice teams in September. Six regional extemporaneous debates were held in 2016-17 leading up to the state championships on March 18th. Each

regional tournament averaged over 25 schools and approximately 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!

2016-17 also featured the second year with the Middle Level Debate League, led by Jen Posner. The league hosted three tournaments with over 13 schools and 130 debaters participating in each. The prospects for debating at the middle level seem very promising!

Thomas Flanagan / CAS-CIAC Endowment Grant Awards

Through the generous sponsorship from many corporate partners, more than \$24,000 in CAS-CIAC/Flanagan Endowment Grants were awarded to eleven member schools this spring. This grant program provides funding to new or existing programs that are educationally sound initiatives in support of high levels of learning. The CSAC board screens applications, selects winners, and presents the awards during an on-site celebration held at each winning school.

State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE)

The 2016-17 edition of the State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE) consisted of twenty high school students who met regularly with Dr. Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner of Education, and Dave Maloney. The SSACE number one project this year was to produce a presentation for the State Board of Education which centers on three topics: Social-Emotional Learning, Career Readiness & Pathways and Gaps in Engagement, Experience, and Attendance. 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 Deirda Preis, Assistant Principal at Fairfield Warde High School, the committee annually designates Connecticut’s finest junior year students as *Governors’ Scholars*. Formed eighteen 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 approximately thirty finalists are celebrated in May at the Governor’s Scholars Luncheon. Finalists 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, recently retired 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 added announcement was the recipient of the “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. Robert Ciaffaglione, a Senior from Newington High School, was the 2017 recipient. Once again, the arts committee was very pleased to have Jostens as its corporate sponsor.

The Look For The Good Project

CSAC offered a new workshop for elementary and middle level schools in December entitled “The Look For The Good Project.” The presenter was Anne Kubitsky, CEO and founder of the program. The “Look For The Good Project” is a research backed program built around the core belief that gratitude changes everything – especially in schools. The workshop revealed how to transform a classroom and/or school or district into a gratitude community of practice. Participants received a toolkit of concrete ideas, strategies, and hands-on techniques that could be immediately implemented in virtually any classroom setting. Gratitude-based practices can support character education initiatives and instructional pedagogy, and can be linked to school climate plans. The feedback that CSAC has received from offering “The Look For The Good Project” has been sensational. In April, we offered a training to assemble a cadre of LFTG Ambassadors who will assist with the program launch in several interested schools this spring and next fall. We hope to offer more workshops on a regional basis.

Middle Level Leadership Conference

New Year, New Skills! A program to jump start the new year for middle school leaders gathered more than 450 middle school students from across the state at Trinity College for an intensive day of training, inspiration and leadership development. Student-led workshops focused on building a climate of acceptance, making a difference at school, taking risks, rising to the occasion and social networking rounded out the day of intensive training for middle

schoolers. The day culminated with a high energy presentation by A'Ric Jackson, pushing students to break down their box, be a 3 percenter and get to making a difference with their new found leadership skills.

Arts in the Middle

CSAC hosted the annual Arts in the Middle Conference at the University of Hartford later this spring. This sold out conference features area artists conducting hands-on, intensive workshops in a variety of mediums including ceramics, mask making, charcoal drawing, digital photography and much more. Students also participated in an interactive group workshop introducing Unified Arts to students and staff. Utilizing the state of the art studios and facilities of the Art School at the university, students got a taste of what it would be like to be an art student at a world class institution.

CT Association of National Honor Societies Spring Conference

The spring CANHS conference for high school chapter advisers and students has been moved to the fall. The workshop will help students to explore the various aspects of their own leadership styles and to gain understanding of how to put them into practice in effective ways in their schools and communities.

Generation Leadership

Working with A'Ric Jackson, The Morgan School and other partners, CSAC is helping to develop a comprehensive curricular program for student leadership development that features student voice. The pilot program will be offered to schools in CT during the 2017-2018 academic year. Enfield High School, The Morgan School, and Kaynor Technical High School have already participated and hope to serve as a model for other schools to follow.

Generation Leadership is a training program designed to teach and empower students to discover their leadership style, create their leadership legacy and philosophy, impact their school through meaningful dialogue and learn how to have an active voice in their academic career, personal life, community and globally. Through various guided discussions, workshops and seminars, Generation Leadership will incorporate assessments, activities, and role playing. In addition, student leaders will learn a multitude of leadership theories and concepts in order to become effective leaders.

Generation Leadership is committed to providing leadership training, seminars and workshops that are personally engaging and thought-provoking and geared towards empowering students. Students will be given skills, tools and strategies to be effective leaders for their generation and beyond. Through the program, students will build self-confidence and a strong sense of self, embrace diversity, understand how to be culturally sensitive to others, become advocates in their community and practice effective leadership principles. The program, potentially, shows great promise for 2017-18 and beyond!