

CouncilConnections

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Message from the Illinois PTA President

"We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power towards good ends!" Mary McCleod Bethune

The statement by Ms. Bethune tells a lot. Our youth have a great potential and all we have to do is look to them to find the directions in which they can go to make this world a more productive and beneficial place. Are you looking at the way your PTA is working to benefit children? Do you have a plan in mind to reach the goals that you have established?

Let us all emphasize the importance of belonging to this organization – there is none finer anywhere. Many have formed over the years to look at the issues that PTA has been dealing with for over 100 years. PTA is devoted to the best interests of childhood. As PTA units we carry the values and objects out into the community. We cannot just look at the local side of our membership but must reach farther afield to ensure that there are equal opportunities for all. We must all work towards making school, home, and community a place where ALL children have the opportunity to reach their ‘powerful potential’.

Hugs,
Jean Razunas



An In-Depth Research Study on Urban School Climate

The National School Boards Association’s Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) will release, in an online webinar, the findings of a major research study, *What We Think*, which surveyed how parents feel about their urban school environments. This survey is a follow-up to two previous school climate surveys by CUBE, *Where We Learn*, which surveyed how students feel about their urban school climate, and *Where We Teach*, which surveyed teachers and administrators.

A total of 10,270 parents in 112 urban schools from 17 states answered the survey, which gauged their perceptions about bullying; expectations of student success; influence of race; parental involvement; safety; and trust, respect, and ethos of caring. Especially striking was the number of male parents participating, nearly 30 percent of the respondents. The online news conference will present highlights of the research findings as well as implications from all three of the school climate studies.

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Major Findings:

The full report, *What We Think*, is now available online for reporters only and is embargoed until 12:01 a.m. April 30, 2008. Major findings follow:

- Parents believe their child's school to be a safe place. The majority of parents surveyed viewed their child's school as a safe place. However, only 42 percent of parents surveyed disagreed that students fight a lot at school. Forty percent of parents were not sure when asked about students carrying guns or knives to school.
- The majority of parents are actively involved in their child's school. Three-quarters of parents agreed that they visited their child's school to support activities.
- Parents believe that their children can achieve and are proud of their accomplishments. The vast majority of parents agreed that their children were capable of performing very well on standardized exams. Additionally, the majority of parents agreed that their children would pursue opportunities in higher education at the community college or university level. Ninety-seven percent of parents were proud of their children.
- Teachers and administrators have gained parents' trust and make them feel respected. The majority of parents (84%) felt that they could trust the teachers at their child's school. The majority (87%) also felt respected by the teachers. Parents agreed that they felt respected by administrators at their child's school (83%).
- Bullying continues to be an issue at school. Little more than half of the parents surveyed felt that teachers had the ability to stop bullying, with close to 30 percent not sure if this was possible. More than 25 percent of parents have spoken to an administrator about bullying. Parents with students in the middle grades (6-8) were the largest group (nearly 11 percent) to report that their child was bullied during the school day at least once per month.
- Parent views vary about the degree of safety in their neighborhoods. The majority of parents (49%) indicated that there had not been violent crimes within their immediate neighborhoods in the past six months, while a quarter of them indicated that there had been.
- Racial differences are not viewed to have an impact on a child's success at school. Race is not a factor in the success of children in their child's school, according to the majority of parents (70%).

Don't Stop Now! Keep your PTA Growing!

All of our PTAs have had our first campaign for membership. But we should not quit there. It is only October and we can continue to increase our PTA membership. Here are a few ideas on how to keep your PTA growing:

- Newsletter – Ask your community to join your PTA in your president's message. Have your membership form in your newsletter. Develop catchy advertisements in your newsletter to get parent's attention. Remember the saying "a picture is worth a thousand words".
- School functions – Set up a membership booth at all your activities – craft fairs, book fairs, dinner nights out, etc.
- Signs and flyers – Have signs in your school promoting the PTA. Be sure to have contact information for your membership chairperson on your signs. Develop a PTA flyer that includes your membership form.

- Vendors – Ask your hot food vendors, spiritwear vendor, and other school vendors to be community members. Remind them it is tax deductible.
- Past Presidents and PTA Life Members – Send a letter to your past Presidents and Life Members asking them to join. I bet most of them will!
- Village Government – Ask your trustees, mayor and park district, to name a few, to be a member of your PTA. Be creative!
- Relatives – Ask grandma and grandpa, aunts and uncles to support your school and your children.
- Teachers and Staff – Remember STC recognizes schools with 100% teacher PTA participation.

Why is membership so important? There are many reasons. For the local PTA, it's to have as many people as possible involved in your school community – working for the children. The more members your PTA has, the more you can accomplish. From a State and National standpoint, it's to continue being the largest volunteer child advocacy association in the nation providing parents and families with a powerful voice to speak on behalf of every child and the best tools to help their children be safe, healthy, and successful - in school and in life.

Also remember, to be eligible for the STC Elementary Scholarship program, you must be a member by November 1.

Got a question? Need some help? I am here to help. Just email or call.

Tom Goodrich
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A Note from the Treasurer

The 2008-2009 school year has been off to a great start. A lot of the schools have already turned in their audits, proposed budgets and accepted budgets, as well as their council dues. Here are the due dates for the various things that are due to the STC Treasurer. October 1st Proposed Budget and Audit Report, November 5th Council Dues of \$50.00 and 2 copies of your Adopted budget, March 4th your scholarship donation.

I have been trying to put all of the past records on to one source. I have purchased Quicken for STC in order to help me achieve that goal. I look forward to serving STC.

Julie Johnson
STC Treasurer

School Pictures

For the third year in a row District #54 used Lifetouch Photography as our picture company. Picture days started in late August and will conclude with Hale School in October. The picture days went very well with the elementary schools finishing in the early afternoon and the Junior Highs finishing right on schedule. This is both a credit to Lifetouch and our hardworking PTA's.

Some schools have already received their pictures and once again the quality is excellent!

I want to thank all the picture chairs and their committees for helping out on picture day. You were very helpful in making things run smoothly. Thanks!!

Deb Loughman
School Picture Chair

Dooley School

Dooley School started out the school year welcoming all new and returning students and families back to school! We were very sad to see our friends in the Magnet program leave us. The program moved to Campanelli and Campanelli is gaining a wonderful group of students, parents, and volunteers!

Our 6th graders had a great time attending their annual Outdoor Education program in September. In nature's classroom they learned to enjoy the world around them. In addition to learning about nature, students learned about themselves and others through various activities. While many 6th graders may have come home tired, and in need of a shower, they also came home with experiences and memories that will last a lifetime.

Julie LaFrenere
Dooley School PTA President

What is the most important thing you would like your students or families to gain from your PTA this year?

- The sense that ALL are welcome, valued, and appreciated.
- A stronger connection to the school and community. A sense of belonging to the school and ownership in PTA events.
- The true meaning of what PTA means and that we are part of a BIG picture that stands for:
1. Supporting and speaking on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children; 2. assisting parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children; and 3. encouraging parent and public involvement in public schools of this nation.

- School and home life enrichment through programs sponsored by our PTA
- I think the most important thing parents and students can gain from our PTA is enrichment: enrichment in the students' activities and in the parents' experiences as well as information to enrich the parent-school connection.
- Knowledge. I would like them to know that supporting the PTA by being a member does not mean we make you do anything. We always welcome volunteers, but volunteering isn't required (or it wouldn't be called "volunteering").
- The most important thing I would like parents and students to gain from our PTA this year is a strong sense of community. One way I would like to do this is by having open communication with staff and parents. When the lines of communication are open, families feel informed, empowered, and willing to reach out to staff if a concern arises.
- To continue to build the close knitted community environment. Getting more parents involved, this includes having the parents work together with each other, the teachers and students.
- I feel this year could be the year in which students and their families would gain a sense of community & contribution, plainly by receiving gratitude. A simple "thank you, you made a difference!" For those PTA committees with hundreds and thousands of dollars, it is effortless to plan a grand event and receive the accolades, but do we make our entire community feel that their contribution, small or grand really makes a difference? A simple thank you to the single mom (that we don't realize stayed up until 1:30 a.m. baking), the dad (who took off work last minute) to chaperone the field trip, the 3rd grader who helped the 1st grader on the monkey bars at recess, the 5th grader who showed the new 6th grade student where to find the school office, the working outside of home parents who send in juice, pencils, apples, prizes, books; are we taking the extra 4 seconds to say the words- "thank you, you made a real difference!"?

Perhaps this will be the year in which we generate a responsiveness with a simply thank you, you made a real difference! Perhaps this is the year in which our students and their families feel that their part, whatever the size, made a difference in their community!