

Newsletter

Keeping the lines of communication open between parents, teachers, administrators and the community strengthens our school and benefits our children.

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue 2 Volume 1 Jul 2008

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President's Corner

Your PTA President is Laurie Carter, who can be reached at no.wonder@verizon.net

Dear Friends of the PTA,

Happy New Year! No, I haven't fallen off my rocker! It is the beginning of a new fiscal year for our PTA!

Your PTA leadership has been working on the plans for the 2008-2009 school year. Some very exciting possibilities will be on the table! We are so happy that more families are stepping forth to introduce new ideas and events! Thank you to all of you who are working to make this year the greatest yet!

If you've driven past the school lately, you've seen the construction that is going on to prepare for the arrival of the 6th grade in August. The flowers that were planted as part of the PTA's Beautification

PTA Vision: Making every child's potential a reality.

PTA Mission: To be a powerful voice for all children,

A relevant resource for families and communities, and

A strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child.

Project are still looking magnificent, thanks to the faithful watering by Tracy Maniscalco.

Another welcomed addition to our school is our new Principal, Dr. Diane Burton! Dr. Burton has been a part of the Lompoc Unified School District for over 30 years as a teacher, a principal, and most recently Director of Curriculum for the district.

With so many changes, what an amazing opportunity we have to strengthen our community and school! Working together, we can make an enormous impact on the lives of children, families and communities. Enjoy the summer!

Fondly,

Laurie Carter



PTA Needs a Few Good Men

Charles "Chuck" Saylor is President-elect of the national PTA organization.

On March 20, 1779, the United States Marine Corps gave birth to a slogan that has stood the test of time: "A few good men." PTA now finds itself in the same position as the Marines did so many years ago—we need good men, too, and more than a few!

Currently, of the millions of PTA members nationally, only 10 percent are men. PTA and our schools need more male involvement. No longer are there enough stay-at-home moms to fulfill all the needs our schools have. No longer is child-rearing considered to be the responsibility only of women. Men are needed more than ever to join women in working for a high quality education for children. More men than ever want to be a major part of their children's lives in school.

Then why are men not more involved at school and in PTA? The answer is simple—most men believe they do not have the time to take part in PTA activities. This objection is easy to address because there are so many great ways to get men involved. For example, the PTA Three for Me program makes it easy to ask the men (and women) of your community to volunteer at least three hours during the school year. Three hours is not a lot of time, but it can mean so much to children and provide volunteers with a rewarding experience they will want to repeat early and often. Helping a student with math or reading, working on school grounds projects, attending school board meetings, or assisting with field trips are just a few of the many ways you can provide time-friendly opportunities for men to volunteer.

Men also are concerned about the time it takes to attend PTA meetings. Many PTAs have started posting meeting minutes and activities on their or the school's Web site. A growing number of PTAs also have started providing podcasts for members who cannot attend. To improve attendance and keep members—especially men—engaged, keep your meetings to the point and informative; you want your members to leave feeling that their time was well spent.

Some men feel uncomfortable in a room full of women. Hold an open house for men to help break the ice and help them meet other men like themselves. Or ask some married members to invite their husbands to go to a meeting with them. When men get a chance to see how they can contribute—and that they're not the only men at the meeting—they're more likely to come back. To find and share ideas for increasing male involvement, go to the PTA Great Idea Bank at www.pta.org.

Membership recruitment is a year-round project. Take time this new year to encourage all parents, but especially fathers, to get involved. Seek out extended family members, community leaders, and business partners and ask them to join PTA. Let everyone know that, just like the Marines, PTA needs them.



Easy Stress Relievers for Family Life

Most parents can predict the times that their stress levels are high when they're at home. That's good, because the key to relieving stress is being aware of your most stressful times, and making some changes to how you deal with tension. The following are the three most common stress times of the day and suggestions for easing the pressure:

1. Morning:

- Get to bed and get up earlier
- Rise early, avoid pressure to get out the door fast
- Get ready before waking others
- Have children make their own lunches
- Take time for breakfast
- Set clocks ahead
- Reward yourself for arriving at work on time

2. Dinner Time:

- Prepare nutritious snacks
- Arrange time after work to listen about a child's day
- Share household chores
- Allow child to choose and help prepare meal
- Coordinate meal preparation and homework time
- Ensure that every family member is present at the dinner table, and that all are heard
- Share clean-up of dishes and house

Leave time for emergencies

Make next day's lunches

3. Clean-up and Bedtime:

- Stick with an agreed TV cutoff time
- Schedule routine tasks (homework, clean-up)
- Do a few maintenance chores daily (bills, dusting)
- Plan what to wear tomorrow
- Develop (self-managed) routines for bedtime
- Practice rest-time if children can't sleep



Member Services Commission
California State PTA www.capta.org *The Communicator* May 2008

The Reflections Program is a cultural arts program of the National PTA. The Reflections Program provides students with the opportunity to use their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as their creative talents, as they interpret a theme:

Announcing the Reflections Theme 2008-2009 "Wow..."

ART CATEGORIES

- Literature
- Musical Composition
- Visual Arts
- Photography
- Film/Video Production
- Dance Choreography

GRADE DIVISIONS

- Preschool – Grade 2
- Grades 3 - 5
- Grades 6 – 8
- Grades 9 – 12

Participation in the Reflections Program is open to all students in attendance at a PTA/PTSA school where the program is sponsored. Look for information soon on the Reflections Program at Buena Vista!

The Creative Bridge: How the Arts Connect Parents and Schools

By Michael E. Sikes

Research tells us that engaged parents, committed to their children's learning and to the success of their schools, are among the richest assets a school can claim. One of the best ways to bring parents into schools, not only as visitors or volunteers but also as fully integrated members of the school community, is through the development of strong arts programs.

Good news for principals

The "arts effect" should be welcome news for school administrators, who bear responsibility for meeting the parent-involvement and student-achievement requirements of the federal legislation known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Principals may be particularly interested to learn that the arts engage parents and family members in a variety of ways, in a continuum that stretches from the school entrance into the classroom. The following are some of the elements of this continuum:

- Outside the school. Artworks created by students, such as murals, stimulate the curiosity of the community while signaling that the school is an inviting and visually rich place.
- In the school office. The prominent display of student artwork in the central office directly communicates that the values, aspirations, and visions of students are at the heart of the school's mission.
- In the halls. Displays of student artwork provide ongoing evidence of student learning via units or lessons that connect the arts with other subject areas, often in ways that parents can understand and appreciate.
- The classrooms. Student artwork displayed on walls, alongside lists of applicable content standards and examples of tools used to assess the work, can give parents a clearer understanding of student mastery of the standards.
- Performances. Having a performance space and using it can provide parents and community members direct engagement with student work, even works in progress in the form of dress rehearsals and recitals. A gym, cafeteria, or multipurpose room can work just as well as an auditorium or theatre.
- Volunteer efforts. Arts projects provide parents with a variety of roles as ushers,

chaperones for a visit to a museum or arts center, teachers' aides, and so on. In these roles, parents can learn alongside their children and gain confidence in working in the arts. Parents can provide essential skills, from building dedicated performance and exhibition spaces to offering marketing advice.

- Cooperative learning. Parents can work with their children on a variety of projects that not only invite, but also depend upon the extra hands and thoughts that a parent can bring to the task.

- Folk arts, folklife, and family history. Each family and community is strongly connected to its own history and culture. These connections can be explored through different kinds of projects, including family folklife research (which students conduct), visiting demonstrations by parents, and community festivals.

The arts and student achievement

Many of the contributions that the arts make to learning have been common knowledge for decades. From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that the arts also provide pathways to link schools and communities, engage parents, and bring about rich explorations of diversity. Now, a considerable and growing body of research indicates that the arts significantly impact learning by enhancing student engagement and thinking.

The arts offer tools to help children learn across all content areas. They can make content more accessible to students with widely diverging learning styles. Moreover, integrated approaches to teaching correspond more closely with how most children learn.

For parents, a new avenue into school

For all of the parents who are connected to their schools, I have also found many who felt excluded. While some parental resistance may stem from school buildings that are simply foreboding, much of it may also stem from the daily routines of school—those aspects of school culture that may seem strange to outsiders. Ironically, most of the official programs that seek to involve parents approach the problem from the standpoint that parents understand schooling and want to be there, but for obstacles in their own lives, such as work hours. But I have found that schools can be inherently welcoming or unwelcoming, depending upon how they approach the following conditions.

1. Information on standards-based education presented by schools in bureaucratic language taken from regulatory instructions and other official sources, can be mystifying to most parents.

2. Parents find the front offices of schools acts as a barrier to their entrance and can make schools seem unfriendly and unwelcoming to them.

3. Some parents, especially in traditional minority cultures, perceive schools as off-limits, where teachers are experts who are beyond approach or questioning.

4. Minority cultures see themselves as marginalized and less central to the school's work.

Here are some ways that the arts can help these conditions:

1. Standards-based education can come alive when expressed in accessible language and illuminated via student work, including writing, visual-art projects, and performances.

2. Schools can create atmospheres that are friendly, enjoyable spaces where student work is continuously celebrated.

3. Parents can be invited to see schools as places where they have a role in initiating ideas and planning.

4. All cultures can be valued as important in the school.

In short, parent involvement and the arts and culture are mutually linked. Where the arts are present, they can invite parents to become involved and even extend their explorations to other subject areas. Therefore, it is essential that schools learn to develop partnerships with parents through the power of the arts to achieve their educational goals.

Conclusion

The arts can be a great untapped resource for schools. Their rich content, ability to engage powerful thinking skills and habits of mind, and natural intersection with content areas across a school's curriculum make them indispensable tools in the teacher's toolbox.

The arts give principals tools for engaging parents in the life of their schools, while providing parents with exciting and meaningful connections to the important work that schools do. Parents may find that the arts are the purest expression of their children's unique gifts, a testament that all young people are creative.

Together, principals, teachers, and parents can reinvent the future, helping transform all schools into community centers of learning and civic engagements. While the arts are not the only tool for helping bring this about, they are one of the best and perhaps the most indispensable and enduring.

Around and About



With weather as moderate as that of the Central Coast, you can enjoy year around outdoor fun! And for the few days that it rains, you'll find plenty of indoor distractions, too!

Village Library Summer Reading Program

Village Library Summer Reading Program: Library manager Norma McIntire reports that the "Catch the Reading Bug" program for pre K-5th grade children has many participants. The program ends Aug. 13 when prizes will be distributed. There will be special Wednesday programs at 1 p.m. For more information on dates, call 733-3323.

Santa Barbara County Fair

Sunday is the last chance to purchase pre-sale tickets for the 117th annual Santa Barbara County Fair. Buy them at: — La Miramar in Santa Maria, Oceano and Lompoc; — Santa Maria Fairpark Ticket Office, 937 S. Thornburg St.

The fair, which will run from July 9-13, will feature the theme "Rock Around the Clock."

Pre-sale tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for youth ages 6 to 11 as well as seniors ages 62 and over. Season passes are \$20. Unlimited carnival ride wristbands are \$18.

Otherwise, general admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for children and seniors. Children age 5 and younger will be admitted for free. On-site parking is available for \$5. Wristbands are \$25.

During the fair gates will be open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily with attractions ranging from carnival rides, games and food provided by Shamrock Shows Carnival to

live music and rodeo.

Opening day will be Dollar Day with admission, parking and carnival rides all costing \$1 each.

The fairpark is in the 900 block of Thornburg Street, off Stowell Road. For more information, go to www.santamariafairpark.com or call the fair office at 925-8824.

Olde Towne Market

From Friday, July 11 2008 To Friday, August 29 2008 5:00pm - 7:00pm Friday of each week. Olde Towne Market runs on Friday nights, July 11 through August 29 in downtown Lompoc from 5-7 p.m. Each night has a different theme, with family entertainment, vendors and food. The popular Friday night

Farmers Market relocates to Cypress Ave. and South H St. as a part of the festivities. To participate as a vendor, contact the Chamber at 805 736 4567 Location: 100 block of South H Street Contact: Chamber office 805 736 4567

Return to Freedom Wild Horse Sanctuary

Return to Freedom is a 300 acre wild horse sanctuary located in the beautiful Jalama Valley of Lompoc. Home to more than 200 wild horses and burros, the organization is working to protect America's remaining wild horse herds through sanctuary, education and conservation. You can visit the sanctuary May-October when they host a variety of tours and clinics for the

public. The sanctuary also welcomes volunteers and offers a family volunteer work weekend each year in August. Visitors will get to observe wild horses living in their natural family bands and herd groups – just as they do in the wild. They will also meet "Spirit", the Kiger Mustang stallion that served as inspiration for the DreamWorks animated movie "Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron". For more info: (805) 737-9246 or admin@returntofreedom.org



Neighborhood Watch Workshop

At 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 22, Vandenberg Village Association will sponsor a community-wide workshop on Neighborhood Watch at Valley of the Flowers United Church of Christ at the end of Constellation Avenue. Guest speaker is Tony Durham, of the Sheriff's Community Involvement office.



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