



# THE WILDCAT

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PTA CO-PRESIDENTS

Spring is here and that means a busy time for all of the students here at Northwestern. There are only a couple of months left in the school year and they will go very quickly. This is a very exciting time for NMS as we have just been named a Georgia School of Excellence! We are all very proud to be a part of such a wonderful school.

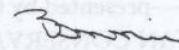
The 8<sup>th</sup> graders are having a field trip to Bulloch Hall on March 30 and 31st. Thanks to Nancy Lattanzi for all of her hard work in organizing this event for the students.

Speaking of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade dance committee could really use your help as they enter the final month of preparation for the dance which will be held on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Please contact either Cheryl Highland at [jmhighland@hotmail.com](mailto:jmhighland@hotmail.com) or Bobbie Tivnan at [bjtivnan@aol.com](mailto:bjtivnan@aol.com) if you are available to help them.

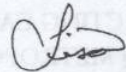
Our next PTA Board meeting is also a General PTA meeting and everyone is welcome to attend. We will be conducting the election of the PTA Executive Board for the 2006/2007 school year at this meeting. It starts at 10:30 and it will

be held in the Media Center. Immediately following the meeting the school administration will be hosting a luncheon to honor everybody that has been a volunteer at Northwestern this school year. Please join us!

As always, your comments and suggestions are always welcome-please contact us at any time with ideas and/or concerns. Have a safe and fun Spring Break!



Bonnie Kitay



Lisa Stammer

## PRINCIPAL'S CORNER

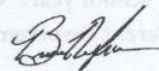
Northwestern received some great news last week. State Superintendent of Schools Kathy Cox named the 2006 Georgia Schools of Excellence. This is the 26<sup>th</sup> year that the Georgia Department of Education has awarded schools with this honor; however, it is just the third year that the winners have been selected based on criteria closely aligned with No Child Left Behind.

Northwestern was selected as one of this year's "Schools of Excellence"! Northwestern was one of only 20 schools recognized across the state; however of that number only two middle schools were recognized and we were the only Fulton County School receiving the honor.

This is obviously a huge honor and one for which the entire faculty and staff are both overjoyed and thankful. There are so many exceptional schools in Fulton County, not to mention the state, that to be recognized for "commitment to excellence and continual improvement" is a tremendous honor. This honor can't be attributed to any one factor, but to a combination of factors, each necessary for effective school improvement. One key to a school's success is the quality of the teach-

ers and support staff. The teachers at Northwestern are truly professional, open to improvement initiatives and relying on collaboration and reflective dialogue to improve practices which benefit students. The community also plays a vital role in school performance. The high level of interest and involvement of Northwestern's parents helps to ensure student success. Finally, the leadership and vision of Dr. O'Prey and his administrative team has laid the foundation for a professional learning community in which teacher expertise and knowledge is valued and student learning is always at the center of the school's vision.

Northwestern is now a "school of excellence", however, this recognition belongs to its teachers, parents and, of course, the students themselves.



Mr. Bruce R. Fraser, Principal



## LEGISLATIVE NEWS

### REGISTER TO VOTE

Don't forget to register to vote!  
If you are not already registered in this area, the process is simple.



Please go to the website [www.sos.state.ga.us/elections](http://www.sos.state.ga.us/elections) to obtain necessary registration forms.

Watch for information about an upcoming **SPLOST III** Vote.



### "BROADWAY BOUND"

Northwestern Middle School students: Come make a scene at **SUMMER DRAMA & ACTING CAMPS**—presented by the award winning **METROPOLITAN CONSERVATORY'S** Teen Scene, Broadway Bound, Movie/Film, Musical Madness, Improv, and Performing Arts Camps.

Registration is open for Alpharetta's Professional Youth theatre students ages 4 to 17. Day camps start June 6th and run through July 25th for Beginner to Advanced. There will be an end-of-week performance in costume.

All classes are taught by professional actors and educators, with degrees in Theatre & Film. Locations in Alpharetta include Hopewell Middle School and Centennial High School.

For details and to register, call 770-394-1461 or visit [www.metropolitanconservatory.com](http://www.metropolitanconservatory.com).

## RENAISSANCE NEWS

We have had a great year! It seems like we've given out a ton of cards... Which means that NWMS students have worked very hard this year towards academic achievement. We hope everyone has used their Renaissance cards not only to support our business partners, but also to cash in on their academic success!!! And, we would like to thank all the parents who assisted this year with the assemblies, coffee carts, and ice cream sundae events.

**Ann Hoover & Jennifer Laubach**

Renaissance Committee Co-Chairs

## TAG TALK

The Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG) will be holding an open house at Emory University April 29, 2006. The mission of the SIG is to provide the highest quality educational and social opportunities for academically gifted and talented students through programs designed to meet their abilities and needs. For more information, call 866-303-4744 or visit [www.giftedstudy.com](http://www.giftedstudy.com). The University of West Georgia in Carrollton will be hosting the 7th annual **LEARN to LIVE Together**, Honors Leadership Academy for Young Women (7th Grade and above) from July 9 - 14, 2006. All information is available on their website for you to view or to download. Visit [www.learn-to-live.com](http://www.learn-to-live.com) or call 770-214-0528.

Northwestern

**PTA**

*everychild. onevoice.*

## NORTHWESTERN NEEDS YOU!

The Northwestern PTA has some open positions for PTA leaders/committee chairs for the upcoming 2006-07 school year. **Open positions include:** PTA Presidents, Website, Historian/Publicity, Parent Involvement, Grounds Beautification, and the 8th Grade Career Day.

**If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee—Sally Hildebrant (770-664-7620), Linda Jones (770-343-6518), Kim Horne (770-754-7857), Susan Hummert (770-346-9128), Melanie McNaughton (770-442-0342), and Pam Kipniss (770-619-0841). Thanks for your consideration to serve your school in this capacity.**

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## THE GREAT TESTING DEBATE: MAKING THE GRADE



Tests today are not like the tests most parents took when they were in school. New forms of evaluating students' work are already in use, and even more changes will be coming in the years ahead. The broad term "assessment" has come into common use to describe these new ways of measuring students' accomplishments.

Tests and assessments perform several vital roles in the education process. They are used most frequently to help students, teachers, schools, and parents know what students have learned and what they still need to study. Teachers can use information from assessments to design lessons that meet the needs of their students. School districts and states use assessment results to evaluate whether they are meeting their goals. Assessments also are used by policy-makers for accountability—to help gauge the effectiveness of programs and schools. Finally, assessments are helpful for transitions. They can show if students are ready to begin a new grade level, or to enter a particular college. Tests are sometimes used—along with other information—to help decide if students should be placed in special programs.

Parents should educate themselves about the tests and other assessments that are used in evaluating their children's progress. For tests and assessments to be most effective, parents need to be informed and to understand the types of assessments that can be used.

### Performance assessments

Increasingly, schools are now using performance assessments, which measure a student's ability to do an actual task, such as playing a piece of music or conducting a chemistry experiment. The strength of this approach to testing is that it focuses directly on complex performances and the knowledge and skills required to accomplish them. Some of the disadvantages of performance assessments are that they are seen as difficult and costly to score and require a great amount of classroom time.

Portfolios are one type of performance assessment that is becoming increasingly popular in schools. Portfolios, which contain samples of students' work, can be used to gather information about what students can do over a long period of time. A writing portfolio, for example, might include a series of story drafts, while a science portfolio might include a collection of lab reports. This approach allows students, teachers, and parents to analyze students' progress and see how their work has changed over time. Portfolios can be difficult to score, but they contain a lot of important information. Some states already have portfolio assessments in place to evaluate students' work in a subject over an entire year.

### Standardized tests

Standardized aptitude and achievement tests still have a major influence on what students are taught. The movement toward education standards will probably see such tests continue to have a significant effect on education—if not an even greater effect than ever before. Parents should advocate for tests that are integrated into the curriculum. They should also be aware of the dangers of test bias; questions on tests might unfairly favor one gender or racial group. There are screening procedures for identifying and eliminating possible sources of test bias. Schools should use only those standardized test that have been examined for those biases.

No test gives a complete picture of a student's knowledge, ability, or aptitude. And test results don't explain why students score as they do. Parents should work with their children's teachers and look at all of the assessment information available to them to get an accurate picture of how their children are doing in school.

As assessments continue to change, parent involvement is extremely important. Assessments can help pinpoint problems, but they can't solve them. Parents, along with teachers, must make sure that assessments are used as they should be—as an aid to the learning process. A good assessment program should be part of an overall educational plan that focuses on critical thinking skills as well as factual knowledge.

Reprinted from the National PTA Website, 2000-2006

## MUSIC SHOWCASE



Don't miss Northwestern Middle School's Percussion Ensemble on April 27!!!! Join us at 8:15 - 8:45 a.m. in the Core Atrium and enjoy the fabulous performance!

## REFLECTIONS

Congratulations to Emily Barker (8th grade)! Her Reflections Visual Arts entry won at the State level. Good Luck at Nationals!



## 8TH GRADE

### DANCE

May 5, 2006

7:00-10:00 PM

Come and catch a sneak peek at the awesome job the 8th Grade Dance Committee has done! The decorations committee, headed up by Diane Colucci, has been working long hard hours to transform the school into a night that the 8th graders will always remember. Now we need your help to complete the transformation. We will be decorating on May 5th from 12:00-6:00 p.m., and we need as many volunteers as possible. Dads have a great opportunity to help out too! Please contact Cheryl Highland at [jmhighland@hotmail.com](mailto:jmhighland@hotmail.com) or Bobbie Tivnan at [bjtivnan@aol.com](mailto:bjtivnan@aol.com), and come join the fun!

## Call for Volunteers: Help Alpharetta host the 2006 Ford Tour de Georgia

We are pleased to announce The City of Alpharetta will again be the site of the Grand Finale of the 2006 Ford Tour de Georgia, America's premier professional cycling event, on Sunday, April 23, 2006. This six-day, 650 mile race across Georgia will pit 120 top riders from 15 national and international teams against each other, and is now the highest ranked cycling stage race, 2.HC, in North America. The race finish in Alpharetta is guaranteed to be an exciting final stage, highlighted by several laps around a 4.1-mile signature finishing circuit. **THIS IS A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!** Be part of the action when these elite racers ride into Alpharetta for the final stage. See the excitement up close! For more information and a volunteer registration form, go to [www.awesomealpharetta.com](http://www.awesomealpharetta.com). Questions should be directed to [tourvolunteers06@awesomealpharetta.com](mailto:tourvolunteers06@awesomealpharetta.com) or Debbie Voboril at 678-297-2811.



## IMPORTANT NORTHWESTERN DATES

April 3-7, 2006	Spring Break
April 17, 2006	Katie Reeves' Community Meeting—Webb Bridge MS (9:30 a.m.)
April 17-21, 2006	Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT)
April 18, 2006	General PTA Meeting/Board Meeting/Elections/Volunteer Luncheon (10:30 a.m.)
April 27, 2006	Music Showcase (8:15 a.m.)—Northwestern Middle School Percussion Ensemble
May 5, 2006	8th Grade Dance (7-10 p.m.)
May 9, 2006	PTA Board Meeting/Get together
May 10, 2006	7th Grade Career Day
May 11, 2006	Music Showcase (8:15 a.m.)—Milton High School's SHEER PANIC
May 12, 2006	Teacher Appreciation Luncheon (time TBA)
May 24 & 25, 2006	Renaissance Assembly

