

February 2008 Advocacy Newsletter

Information gathered by the Education, Environment, Health and Wellness, Parent Involvement, Parenting and Family Life, Cyber Safety and Special Education Chairs to assist you in your advocacy efforts



Education

- **Black History Month:** The Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) Web site, <http://www.free.ed.gov>, offers hundreds of teaching and learning resources highlighting the heritage of African-Americans and covers such topics as the Civil Rights Movement, Tuskegee Airmen and Harriet Tubman.
- **The U.S. Department of Education Guides:** Three new guides for parents, K-12 educators and higher education officials on the federal law that protects the privacy of students' education records have been released. The guides provide information so that, empowered by an understanding of the law, parents will be able to protect their children's privacy and school officials will know how to act decisively and quickly to maintain school safety when threats arise. For a free copy of these guides, visit <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/safeschools>
- **Calendar:** For a free printable 12 month educators' calendar, visit: http://www.teachervision.fen.com/tv/printables/calendar/Educator_Calendar_2008.pdf
- **Achieve, Inc.:** A bipartisan, non-profit organization formed by the nation's governors and business leaders in 1996 developed a policy brief (December 2007) featuring lessons learned by states that have put higher graduation requirements in place. It addresses challenges of policy design as well as strategies for implementation, communication and coalition building. For more information go to <http://www.achieve.org/files/AchievePolicyBriefDec18.pdf>
- **Free College Planning Guides:** The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) <http://www.nacacnet.org/MemberPortal/> has partnered to develop and disseminate two free college planning guides to help prepare teens for college: Tips for Parents with Middle School Teens and Tips for Parents with High School Teens. Order the brochures by downloading the order form or emailing info@nacacnet.org with your mailing address and the number of brochures desired. The brochures can also be downloaded at: <http://www.nacacnet.org/MemberPortal/Products/Publications/>
- **Resources for parents and teachers on helping children succeed academically:** <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/partnership-tips.html> ; <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/landing.jhtml> ; <http://www.nea.org/parents/tools/index.html>
- **General Education & Diploma Requirements:** The NYSED has produced a website with updated information on General Education & Diploma Requirements, Commencement Level (Grades 9-12). The site provides access to charts highlighting the diploma requirements for students. The centerpiece of the site is a new chart, which reflects changes in regulations enacted within the recent past. The site is available at: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/gradreq/intro.html> For the math chart: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/mst/RegDipReqMathCht.htm>
- **Homework Hotline Helps Students across the State:** HOMEWORK HOTLINE, the live, statewide call-in show where master teachers help kids with homework on the air launches its 17th season on New York's public television stations. Geared to students in grades 4 through 12, HOMEWORK HOTLINE provides the tools students need to succeed with homework and supports academic achievement across a variety of NYS Learning Standards. The website can be accessed <http://homework-hotline.org/> .

- **The Big Read** aims to provide citizens with the opportunity to read and discuss a single book within their communities. The initiative includes innovative reading programs in selected cities and towns, comprehensive resources for discussing classic literature, an ambitious national publicity campaign, and an extensive Web site providing comprehensive information on authors and their works. <http://www.neabigread.org/about.php>
- Each year **VESID** holds a series of public meetings to gather ideas on how VESID can improve services and results. This year, VESID is particularly interested in obtaining your comments on interagency partnerships related to transition, supported employment and postsecondary education. Public meetings will be held February 12 and 13, 2008, in NYC, Albany and Rochester. In addition to the public meetings, recommendations can be submitted in writing to VESID, VR Policy and Partnerships Unit-Room 1603 (OCP), NYS Education Department, Albany, NY 12234. The current State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Services is available for review at: <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/stateplan/>



Environment

- **Green Cleaning at your school:** NY is one of only 2 states in the country that has a Green Cleaning in Schools law, which has been in effect since 2005. https://www.ogs.state.ny.us/purchase/spg/pdfdocs/SEL409-1_SFL163-b.pdf The law requires elementary and secondary schools to identify and procure environmentally-sensitive cleaning and maintenance products that are available. Schools are required to follow guidelines, specifications, and sample product lists developed by the state for purchasing these products. The OGS Guidelines address five categories of cleaning products – cleaning products (general purpose cleaners, bathroom cleaners, carpet cleaners and glass cleaners), hand soaps, floor finish products, floor finish stripper products and vacuum cleaners.



Health and Wellness

- **TV Turnoff Week:** The NYS Department of Health Obesity Prevention Program and the Center for Screen-Time Awareness will once again partner for a 2008 Statewide TV Turnoff Week, April 21-27. This partnership is driven by strategies which are outlined in the NYS Strategic Plan for Overweight and Obesity Prevention, A main goal of the plan addresses the reduction in TV viewing and other recreational screen time among children. More information on TV Turnoff Week can be found at: www.screentime.org
- **Healthy School Lunches Sell:** A University of Minnesota study shows school lunch sales don't decline when healthier meals are served and that more nutritious food doesn't necessarily cost schools more to produce. <http://include.nurse.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080110/ALL01/80108003/-1/frontpage>
- **Bridges to Health** is a new comprehensive community care program which focuses on children in foster care, the first of its kind in the nation which began on 1/1/08. Bridges to Health is part of Governor Spitzer's Children's Agenda, aimed at improving opportunities for all NY children, including those with special needs. It will include the enrollment of children in NYC and the Rochester and Albany regions in the first year; expand to the Syracuse and the Lower Hudson Valley regions in the second year; and to Long Island and the Buffalo region by the third year. Additional information on how and where to apply is available at: www.ocfs.state.ny.us/bridgestohealth



Parent Involvement

- **PTA Take Your Family to School Week, February 10-16, 2008:** Get connected to your child's school experience! Participate in PTA Take Your Family to School Week, February 10-16, 2008. During the week leading up to PTA Founders Day 2008, PTAs across the country will be celebrating our founders' vision with events and activities to help parents and other family members get to know their children's teachers and schools. Put the week on your calendar and plan to participate in-or even help out at-your school's events.
- **Edutopia:** Have you visited Edutopia online? (Information and inspiration for innovative teaching in K-12 schools): <http://www.edutopia.org/>. There is a whole section devoted to parent involvement. (Click on parents & partners)
- **Announcing the Phoebe Apperson Hearst - National PTA Excellence in Education Partnership Award:** This National PTA Award was established to recognize PTA units whose collaborative efforts with parents, families, educators and community members promote parent/family involvement with ongoing programs that encourage student success. The national winner will: receive two expense-paid trips, one for the PTA president or designee and one for a representative of the collaborative group, to the Annual National PTA Convention; participate in convention activities as requested; be featured in National PTA publications; and receive \$2,000 for a PTA program promoting parent involvement. Applications may be downloaded from the National PTA website at: http://www.pta.org/national_leadership_subprogram_1117232304937.html
Completed applications are due to the NYS PTA office postmarked on or before April 1st. All winners will be notified by National PTA directly.



Special Education

- **Childhood Bipolar Disorder:** A frontline documentary on PBS 1/8/08 called "The Medicated Child" focused on childhood bipolar disorder. You can find it at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/medicatedchild/>
- **Assistive Technology:** The NY Governor's Expo on Assistive Technology is set for May 15, 2008. The Expo is FREE this year so go to the website at www.ATEXPO2008.com. You can print out the registration form by clicking on Attendees. In addition to the nearly 100 vendors, there will be workshops on a wide variety of topics including employment, education, community living, AT and IT.