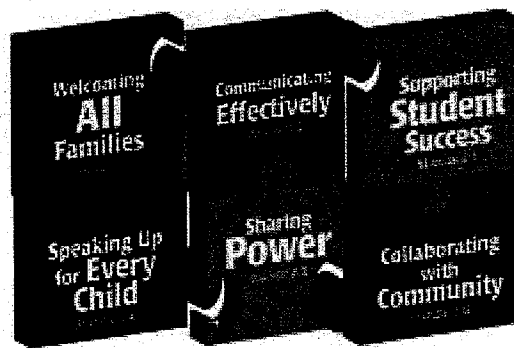




9th District
2009-2010 Best Ideas
National Standards for
Family School Partnerships

Spring Conference
April 27, 2010

This year, the 9th District of Georgia PTA added an awards opportunity for our PTAs/PTSAs based on the 6 National Standards for Family School Partnerships. The information included in this “Best Ideas” book was taken from those submissions. Thank you to all of the PTAs/PTSAs who participated!



PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community.....Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard 2: Communicating effectively.....Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Standard 3: Supporting student success.....Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard 4: Speaking up for every child.....Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Standard 5: Sharing power.....Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Standard 6: Collaborating with community.....Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

(more information can be found at www.pta.org)

Standard 1 - Welcoming All Families

Mableton Elementary PTA

South Cobb Council

Our PTA invites parents and guardians to participate and to support their students. All events are family oriented all members of the family are welcome.

We welcome new families to our school throughout the year we have PTA packets that are given to new families so they can quickly learn about what PTA does at Mableton Elementary and also contact information for all officers and committee chairs.

Pickett's Mill Elementary PTA

Tom Mathis, Sr. Council

During Sneak-a-Peek at the beginning of school, we handed out a welcome packet with a PTA membership. Each packet consisted of a welcome newsletter explaining what PTA does, upcoming events, calendar, and coupons from many of our Partners in Education and local businesses. This was especially beneficial to new families to the school community who don't know about our Committees, our PTA meetings, Family Night Dinners, Fundraisers, Community Outreach programs and many other things we offer at the school.

Garrison Mill Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

100% of parents and community members feel welcomed at Garrison Mill! This was our parent and staff score on this year's School Improvement Opinion Survey. We are very happy with this compliment! This year the GMPTA strived to not only welcome everyone to our school, but to also invite every family to participate in our school community. We have achieved this goal by greeting every parent and by personally asking for help with activities. The response is almost always positive. We have diligently worked at finding a place for everyone to serve and this year we created a few new activities and groups to do so. We held our first annual International Night that was hosted by over a dozen school families originating from different countries. Our favorite new group is our "F.B.I.". F.B.I. stands for "Fathers Being Involved". Fathers were asked to sign up and pledge at least three hours of their time to their child's school. We gave the F.B.I. positions "cool" titles like: "school dance bouncer", "movie night perimeter guard", or "computer specialist". This program has been a huge success! The dads in black are always present at our PTA events and the students really respect our "agents". There is a place for everyone to share their time and talents; the key is to finding the right fit.

Mt. Bethel Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

In the beginning of the school year, our PTA and Foundation jointly sponsored an event that allowed families to come together in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. Night in the Park(ing Lot) was a free, fun filled evening in September designed to welcome families and kick-off the new school year. When the families and staff gathered together, they formed relationships, made memories, and gained a sense of community. Families brought their own blankets and picnic dinners. Many families who attended included their siblings, parents and grandparents. Children and adults participated in hula hoop contests.

A DJ played music, while children had the opportunity to have their faces painted, eat snacks, and make new friends. PTA officers attend and talk to parents about opportunities to volunteer at our school.

East Side Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Recognizing the diversity of our school family, the PTA hosted a parent workshop entitled **American Schools 101** in September. The goal was to provide attendees with an overview of the school structure, PTA history/priorities, volunteer opportunities and cultural expectations. We invited *all* East Side parents and arranged the room so that attendees found their country of origin table where 7 interpreters were stationed. These interpreters were a combination of District staff and volunteer parents. Over 30 non-English speaking parents attended and many commented on the usefulness of the information. We sold 5 PTA memberships that night. Four parents agreed to lead the Diversity & Inclusion Committee, an area where we had not successfully recruited volunteers in the past.

Throughout the year, we emphasized the **variety of volunteer opportunities** that are available to working and stay-at-home parents and shifted our Board meeting schedule so that working parents could attend.

Timber Ridge Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

A highlight of the year at Timber Ridge for all families was our *International Festival* held in February. Over 15 countries and Hong Kong were represented by Timber Ridge families from those countries, with displays from each country including native dress, toys, maps and tri-folds. Children were given a 'passport' they used to visit each country. Once they answered a question specific to that country their passport was given a stamp (flag sticker). If they earned a stamp from every country they were eligible for a prize (luggage tag). There was also a display for Haiti that provided information about the earthquake and what children and families can do to help the victims. In conjunction with our H.O.W.L Committee (Helping Others With Love), medical supplies and clothing were collected and actually flown directly to Haiti by a Timber Ridge parent with family in Haiti. There was live music performed by a jazz band consisting of students from Walton High School, food samples from around the world, as well as a fashion show of native African clothing. It was a powerful evening that taught children that we are all citizens of a big, beautiful world that extends far beyond the four walls of our school.

Kincaid Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Our goals promote family involvement; our PTA, school, and students can only truly succeed if they have ongoing support from our families in the education process. Our biggest challenge is to reach out to families where they are, offering programs to meet their needs and volunteer opportunities to fit their talents and availability. We strive to provide situations for families to have positive experiences at school through several on-site non-academic events. We do this by offering low- or no-cost, non-fundraising, fun, family-oriented events every other month. This year, these programs included our Welcome Back Picnic, the Ambassador program (provides mentors for new families), Family Fitness Night, Heritage Night, Spring Fling, and a planned outdoor Movie Night. We also specifically recruit non-conventional volunteers, such as through our World Explorers' Club, which brings other cultures to our students, and activities such as Walk To School Day, which brings more adult male involvement.

Sope Creek Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Sope Creek Elementary School's population is not as diverse as other schools. The SCPTA Diversity Committee reached out to all the families and brought the first annual International Week at the Creek. With a weeklong celebration of all the cultures alive within our school, the week ended with an International Festival. Twenty six Sope Creek families showcased over fourteen different countries with food, acts, traditions, and cultural displays. We were even visited by descendants of Chief Soap (our spelling was changed over the years) for whom our school is named. Sope Creek welcomes the world within its school.

Hightower Trail Middle PTSA

East Cobb County Council

We welcome all families into the school community before the first day of school with our *Sneak-a-Peek* program. This event serves as a vehicle for recruiting members to the PTSA and identifying volunteer opportunities for our parents. We man the tables with committee chairs and former PTSA officers, so that our Executive Board remain free to mingle in the crowd of parents answering questions and assisting parents as they fill out the required forms. We feel that this makes us more accessible to our parents and students. A tight bundle of PTSA forms along with a cover letter detailing the goals and objectives of the Executive Board is placed in each Cobb County Folders and sent home with every student during the first week of school. This allows us the opportunity to achieve our objective of reaching every Hightower Trail household by the end of August and communicating to all a welcome to Hightower Trail MS. We also prepare packet information for the Front Office staff to give to new families upon enrollment in the school throughout the year.

East Cobb Middle PTSA

East Cobb County Council

The 2009-2010 school year brought changes to East Cobb Middle School and the ECMS PTSA. ECMS has a new principal and a newly acquired Title 1 status. Parent involvement is top priority the PTSA. Our biggest success is accessing families to help in various capacities within the school. During the first week of school, a volunteer sheet was distributed to all ECMS families. We took the sheets and created a list of volunteers by their interest. Our PTSA Committees use an online program to recruit these volunteers when they were needed. PLEASEBRINGIT.COM has been an invaluable tool in organizing volunteer and donation opportunities. Through the website, we create online signup sheets to post our needs. We distribute the link to the "please bring it" signup sheets in the E-news blast, the new PTSA blog, the PTSA newsletter, and also email it directly to the volunteers from the volunteer list. Response has been overwhelming. Now all families have the ability to join in creating a successful school and PTSA.

Standard 2 - Communicating Effectively

Mableton Elementary PTA

South Cobb Council

Mableton Elementary PTA provides a weekly newsletter known as the Friday Flyer. We have information about current CCSD news, legislation, community, PTA and school events, and programs. All of our MES PTA communications are sent home in English and Spanish when possible.

Pickett's Mill Elementary PTA

Tom Mathis, Sr. Council

We communicated in many ways to our school families. Each child was given a communication folder at the beginning of the year. Every week on the same day, it goes home with the child with PTA or school information. That way the parent knows that is the day to look for information coming from the school other than homework and grades.

A handbook/directory is created at the beginning of school that consists of school information, lunch & bus schedule, teachers & staff, room moms, and children's' addresses & phone numbers (optional).

A monthly newsletter is sent out to each child. It consists of current and future events, thank you to committees for their hard work, praises & congratulations to achievements of students, and a letter from our principal.

We also send out a weekly e-blast to our school families that tells them about the upcoming week's activities.

We have found that communication is very important in having a successful PTA. We use different ways of reaching our parents so they know what is happening and they know they are an important part of making our school a success.

Garrison Mill Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

One of GMPTA's greatest accomplishments is the amount of parent involvement we have and we credit most of this to our communication. We communicate with our families at least weekly. We use our bi-monthly newsletter to help families be aware of what has happened, what is happening, and what will be happening at our school and in the community. We use e-blast to quickly "get the word out" and our website has important information as well as links to "Capitol Watch" and "P.E.N.S.". We use PTO Manager, the school marquee, and calling posts to remind our community about activities as well as send home fliers. Our most successful form of communication is personal contact. We, the executive team, have an "open door" policy. At least one member of our executive board is present at school every day and we ask parents to share concerns, ideas, or compliments with us. We continually and effectively communicate and that is one reason why we have over 80% of parents who volunteer for at least one activity. Communication works, parent involvement is high, and that helps our students succeed.

Mt. Bethel Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

The Bugle, our monthly PTA newsletter, was an excellent tool to promote parent involvement. The ten to twelve page publication kept parents informed about upcoming PTA and school-sponsored events, volunteer opportunities, student achievement, program and workshop registration, and Georgia and National PTA news. Each issue's front page listed our web address and our Partners in Education. Every family in the school receives a copy of The Bugle, and extra copies are available for families visiting the school.

Sope Creek Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

The Sope Creek Elementary School PTA has an effective communication network of both printed and electronic methods. We have a united atmosphere which engages every family and our community. The monthly school newspaper The Creek Chronicle, a weekly email news blast, the SCPTA blog, and the school marquee all come together to keep information at our families' fingertips and informs the surrounding community of school events. A network of Room Representatives welcomes families and keeps an open dialogue between parents, teachers and SCPTA. The Sope Creek PTA uses the Room Representatives to deliver one "Sope Creek Families PTA Upcoming Events" email every Friday. This email is composed by the PTA Co-Presidents. If a PTA Committee has an event or needs a call for volunteers, they must submit their information to the PTA Co-Presidents by Tuesday for the Friday email. The teachers get a condensed version of the PTA family email every Wednesday for their Friday blog updates. The teacher blogs also have a link to the SCPTA blog. The SCPTA Co-Presidents write a note and list the events to post on the SCPTA blog every Friday. But we do not stop at just PTA weekly events. We also "get the word out" for other Sope Creek groups such as the Foundation, the Student Council and the school when they have events or programs to promote. Our weekly email format is as follows: a welcome line to Sope Creek families, a listing of PTA events for the week, upcoming volunteer opportunities and deadlines, and as needed: school news, other school group news, and any other information deemed appropriate parent news by the Co-Presidents. If an entry form is needed, such as for the Reflections and Heroes contests, the email will contact the hyperlink to download the form.

East Side Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Results of a parent survey told us that our weekly electronic newsletters were too long and many families did not access our website. Therefore, we focused on the most effective way to share information between school and families.

We reformatted **E-News** to include a "Week at a Glance" at the top to highlight events. Supporting information was then provided in a topical blurb in the body of the E-News. We placed relevant community events on our web-based calendar, making information available to parents while avoiding reader fatigue. A traditional paper calendar is also available.

We revamped the PTA website to draw more families to the site on a consistent basis by making it a worthwhile experience. The revisions include a more up-to-date look, coverage of Priority Committees and a weekly blog with forms, flyers and detailed event information. There is also a tab that takes viewers to the school home page.

Kincaid Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Our PTA is fortunate to enjoy a supportive, open relationship with school administrators. This relationship flows to our General Membership, as we provide information from families to administration and from administration to staff. We provide informal events at school allowing families to interact with staff and administration in a casual, non-pressured environment; these situations allow for relationship building at the critical level – before families *need* it. We introduce the idea of open, two-way communication at our New Family Get-Togethers, held during the first few weeks of school. This event brings teachers & staff and families together in a question-and-answer forum. We publish a monthly PTA newsletter, maintain a PTA website (www.KincaidPTA.org), distribute PTA e-messages, and use the school's weekly newsletter. We also always brand our flyers and media with our PTA logo, the everychild.onevoice. logo, and use colored paper designated for PTA only.

Hightower Trail Middle School

East Cobb Council PTA

Communicating effectively has been a major focus of Hightower Trail PTSA for this year to ensure that communication between the home and school achieves three clear objectives: regular, two-way, and meaningful. Effective communication is the foundation for input, sharing, and involvement. Some improvements made this year included a streamlining of information, the addition of web-links for more information stored on our PTSA website, and the archiving of past editions on the PTSA website. We also changed the lay-out prioritizing the PTSA and School News to the top of the email. We incorporated an 'upcoming events' section at the top of the email for quick reference. We decided this year to do away with the paper newsletter, Trailblazer, as part of an environmentally friendly collaboration with the school. Instead we attach a Principal's message every other month and then a Co-President's message on the alternate months and provide an open forum for extended information from the grade level teams, music department as well as the other organizations within the school community. A long running goal of the Hightower Trail PTSA to maximize communication without overwhelming otherwise busy parents and limiting our footprint on our environment will keep us forward facing in our communication efforts for years to come.

East Cobb Middle PTSA

East Cobb County Council

In 2009-2010 the East Cobb Middle School PTSA streamlined and enhanced communication. We use several methods of communication to reach the ECMS families: E-news blast, a newly created PTSA blog, messages through the principal's weekly call out, and the PTSA newsletter. This year PTSA newsletter was reborn as The Cougar Chronicle, an effective tool to showcase PTSA programs, school activities and events, grade level "happenings," student and teacher successes, and highlight the many opportunities for student and family involvement at ECMS. The success of the newsletter depends on families actually receiving it. Our Newsletter Committee Chair decided to only publish the paper at progress and report card distribution times. The newsletter comes home in the same envelope as the reports and is more likely to be seen by parents and guardians. The newsletter can also be downloaded from the ECMS PTSA blog. Information is now at our families' fingertips.

Standard 3 - Supporting Student Success

Mableton Elementary PTA

South Cobb Council

Mableton Elementary PTA encourages parents to volunteer and support their students in the classroom as well as at home. We provide lots of information in the weekly newsletter offering tips for parents and giving them ideas to help improve student success. We work with teachers in all departments to give our relevant information regarding testing or programs happening in the school. We reward students for various activities and with programs throughout the year. We use our school store to reward students for meeting their Accelerated Reader goals monthly.

Pickett's Mill Elementary PTA

Tom Mathis, Sr. Council

The WatchDOGS Program at Pickett's Mill has been such a success that several other schools in Cobb County have joined the program. On the average, we have two WatchDOGS on duty every school day. The addition of these positive male role models in the school has had a tremendous effect on our students. The men help in the classrooms by reading, tutoring, and helping the teachers with the students. They enjoy eating lunch with their own children and even playing with the students during recess. We only ask for dads to serve just one day per year, but many have enjoyed the program so much that they have scheduled additional days.

The addition of this program has strengthened the safety and security of our school. Pickett's Mill has been chosen as a potential site for a Regional Model by the WatchDOGS National Office. We have had tremendous feedback from the teachers, administrators, parents and most importantly, the students. It's a win-win for everyone!

Garrison Mill Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Garrison Mill received the "Gold Award" from the Governor this year and we are thrilled to have a small part of our student's success. GMPTA supports success with our activities and programs. We participate in the Reflections and Honoring Our Heroes programs to promote writing and creativity. We invite cultural arts performances to enhance the educational standards; "The Rosa Parks Story", "Kris Kelly, American Indian Culturalist", "Holidays around the World". During Exceptional Children's Week, we had an assembly about how to talk with autistic children and make them your friends. For Health and Nutrition Week we held a student boot camp and Kaiser Permanente presented a puppet show entitled "Give Peace a Chance".

To support the school's goal of higher math skills, GMPTA purchased user rights to a school wide internet math interactive program this year. First in Math is set up so every student has an account that can be used at school and at home. There are contests within the class, grade, school, district, state, and country. We have already seen an increase in basic math timed tests and we are hopeful that this will carry over to the standardized tests as well.

Brumby Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Brumby Elementary School PTA sponsored both Reflections and "Honoring our Heroes". The Reflections winners received cash prizes, while every student received a certificate. The next contest we conducted "Honoring our Heroes" had twice as many entrants (155) and every student who entered received a prize and a certificate. We went to local businesses and asked for prizes, as well as purchasing some low cost items.

The goal of these contests was to encourage participation. We believe if these contests are conducted next year the participation will be even greater.

Mt. Bethel Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Our Healthy Habits committee, only 3 years old, brought significant changes to Mt. Bethel this year. The goal of the committee is to help children learn healthy habits that will stay with them the rest of their lives. Last spring, the committee co-chairs received a grant from Lowes to help pay for a track and exercise stations at the school. Through the sale of brick pavers to families and the community, the committee raised additional funds to pay for the track. The track was completed over the summer. The committee started a Walk to School day, held in October, to encourage children to walk or ride their bikes to school. The committee started a very popular Fruit Friday program. Fresh whole fruit is available on Friday mornings as a snack, paid for by families in honor of a teacher or loved one.

East Side Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

In a letter sent home to parents at the beginning of the year, our principal outlined math as the priority area for improved student performance. To support this priority, the PTA partnered with the school and Foundation to purchase over 800 licenses for **First in Math**. This web-based program consists of math games that students play at school and home to improve math fluency. Letters containing instructions and background info on how the program complements core math curriculum were sent home. A *First in Math Marathon* was conducted in February, encouraging participation.

In addition, we appropriated \$4,000 year-to-date specifically for math-focused instruction. This sum includes sending teachers to math conferences, purchasing sets of Versatiles Math Labs and Hands-On Equations. These supplemental programs offer classroom-tested activities in which students can practice skills independently and at their own pace. We used Campbell's label points to purchase math games for two 4th grade classes.

Sope Creek Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Since fundraising is a part of PTA and how the PTA can provide enrichment programs to their students, the Sope Creek PTA decided to make the 2009-2010 fundraiser one that every student could enjoy and be part of its success. In the past, approximately 20 percent of the student population participated in the yearly gift wrap fundraiser. This year, with a 90 percent fundraising participation rate, the Boosterthon Fun Run reached more Sope Creek families than any other fundraiser in its history. The "All Star"

theme caught the enthusiasm of every student and they generated pledges from all 50 states and over 30 countries. 100% of the students received a Fun Run t-shirt and ran the Fun Run laps whether they participated in the fundraising or not. From running one lap to 35 laps, the entire Sope Creek student body participated in the fun run and ran a total of 38,352 laps, almost 2397 miles! No student was excluded regardless of ability. Families and friends came out in force to cheer on the students as they had a great day running and developing strong bodies. With this inspiring fundraiser, every student is an "ALL STAR!"

Timber Ridge PTA

East Cobb County Council

We are very excited about a new project this year to produce a *Literacy Publication*. We are publishing a book of short stories or poetry written completely by students at Timber Ridge. The PTA developed this new project to encourage higher-level thinking and improve the children's writing skills. We believe when a child sees their work published they will have pride in their accomplishment and this will get the whole student body more excited about writing. To implement this the first year we included grades 3 through 5, with the intent to include all grades next year. Our principal and teachers were very excited about the idea and worked with our chairperson implementing the program in the classroom so that the writing assignments would coordinate with the academic curriculum for each grade level.

Our committee worked with a group of fifth graders to help in the publication process. A committee member trained the children on the desktop publishing software and all the typing and story layout was done by the children. The books will be distributed at the end of the school year and will be a valuable keepsake as the children continue on to middle and high school. We also hope to supply a copy of the book to the local branch of the Cobb County Public Library, as well as to the East Cobber Magazine to let the community know what great writers we have at Timber Ridge!

Kincaid Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

We distribute a Teacher Survey and a Family Survey annually to assess our progress, gather feedback, and solicit ideas for the next year's programs; our math, science, and writing programs are all offered in response to identified needs. When our principal shared achievement goals and concerns, we respond with programs and informational articles in our publications. Our Parent Education Night on "How To Instill Responsibility and Self Motivation," was well attended. We have made a conscious effort to move away from candy and food-based incentives and, in partnership with school administrators, have been able to offer incentives such as extra recesses and pajama days. Our primary fundraiser this year was a fitness-oriented Fun Run & Roll. Family Fitness Night, held during Healthy Choices Week, showed families how to have fun together in healthy ways; we offered four fitness venues including martial arts, gymnastics, Pilates, and football warm-up drills.

Hightower Trail Middle PTSA

East Cobb County Council

We endeavor to **support student success** by regularly placing parenting articles in our newsletters, advertised workshops available at our school and also within the area, and encouraging parents to

become involved at the school. Our Parent and Family Involvement Committee maintained the Student and Parent Resource library in our Guidance department. This catalogue of pamphlets full of information relevant to families of middle school students deals in a wide range of issues from learning disabilities all the way through to the pit-falls of our toxic culture. This committee also introduced an accompaniment to our Husky Highlights in the form of a once a month newsletter called the Middle Years Publication. This two page attachment with articles and helpful tips for parents of middle school students fulfilled an ambition of our Principal to offer valuable information to the parents of her students. The committee also worked in partnership with Tritt ES to offer The Passage Groups, Parent to Parent Program to a combination of Tritt and Hightower Trail parents during the month of February and with East Side ES to host an evening Celebrate Calm parent seminar with the dynamic Kirk Martin. Finally, our Grants Program allows us to offer support to the curriculum by enhancing the offerings of the county so that teachers can enhance their curriculum and support the success of their students.

Standard 4 - Speaking Up for Every Child

Mableton Elementary PTA

South Cobb Council

We use our weekly newsletter and website, www.mabletonpta.com to keep our parents informed about local school board issues like the budget, surveys and local district news.

Garrison Mill Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

“every child. one voice.” has been our top concern and focus this year. GMPTA has attended the Advocacy Conferences, PTA Day at the Capitol, and school board meetings. We have reported on what we have learned and the concerns we have at meeting and in our newsletter. We write letters to legislators and also encourage others to do so. In our newsletter, we advertise our school board member’s blog as well as community activities that raise awareness of educational and children’s issues. We invite our representatives to our school so they can better understand who their decisions effect. Our school board member, Mr. Banks, is an active participant at GM and he held a question and answer meetings after our PTA meeting this month about the budget crisis. Senator Chip Rogers will be speaking with parents at a meeting that the GMPTA will be hosting in a few weeks. Our goal is for every child to succeed.

Mt. Bethel Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Our Legislative committee worked hard during the year to keep our school community informed of PTA policy positions and important information from our local legislators. In June, one of the committee chairs went to Washington DC to lobby for changes to the Child Nutrition & Protection Act. The other committee chair regularly attends school board meetings, and has encouraged the parents of our school to express their opinions on the following issues during the school year: 1) standards based report card, 2) school bus stop changes, and 3) balanced school year calendar. Their regular communication with the school community, through articles in “The Bugle” and emails, helped our parents stay informed on these and other important issues.

East Side Elementary School PTA

East Cobb County Council

Just as the 2010 Georgia state legislative session began in January, the PTA invited a member of the Georgia PTA Legislative Team to a Board meeting to speak about the organization’s history in child advocacy and why those efforts are still important today. We also invited a wider range of parents and all teachers to attend this informational training session. Much information was shared, including a handout of who are the decision-makers for the school system, how to use Capitol Watch and how to become involved in advocacy efforts.

Our weekly electronic newsletter contains information about pending legislative items that PTA is tracking. This is distributed to over 1,000 parents at our school and articles covering the primary legislative issue for our state – the budget - have appeared in our school newsletter. Parents are

consistently urged to contact their elected officials and given the appropriate contact information to do so.

Kincaid Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

We strive to keep our families informed of local education policies and discussion by attending BOE meetings and events, and reporting back to our Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and General Membership. We use e-messages to inform parents about upcoming critical votes, encouraging them to share their feedback; we always include email addresses and/or phone numbers of elected officials. We include contact information in our newsletter for curriculum links, and for CCSD & BOE member updates. We also invite our BOE representative and county commissioner to our school and PTA events. We had nine registrants for the PTA Day at the Capitol, and we attended the fall Advocacy Conference. We include legislative updates in our monthly newsletter and in our e-messages, and we encourage our members to sign up for state and federal legislative updates. We have a legislative update planned for our final General Membership meeting this year.

Sope Creek Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

There are many types of learners and many types abilities or “smarts.” Realizing what type of gift each student has becomes a valuable tool in enhancing their learning experience. The smarts include Word Smart, Math Smart, Art Smart, Body Smart, Music Smart, People Smart, Self Smart, and Earth Smart. Each month Sope Creek Elementary School and the PTA celebrate a specific smart. The Sope Creek Elementary School PTA Exceptional Children Committee (ECC) educates teachers, parents, and students about topics relevant to children with academic, physical, and/or social challenges. Throughout the school year, the ECC conducts workshops and provides reading materials for parents and teachers. Each February, the ECC presents programs during Ability Awareness Week to build awareness of different learning styles, share information about effective teaching strategies for different learners, and teach acceptance of all learners. ECC encompasses every student’s abilities because every student is exceptional. Finding a child’s smart gives that child a chance to shine and be heard.

Hightower Trail Middle PTSA

East Cobb County Council

PTSA supports all areas of student endeavors in an effort to **speak up for every child**. The Hightower Trail PTSA has several long running programs showcasing the success of our students that we chose to enhance this year. Our goal being to ensure Hightower Trail families felt empowered to advocate for their own and other children, to ensure that students felt valued and had access to learning opportunities that support their success. Examples of these include our Honor’s Receptions held during every nine week grading period, a bulletin board on each grade hall updated throughout the school year by parent volunteers showcasing the achievements of individual students, and finally our regular updates in our Husky Highlights detailing Capital Watch information relevant to Middle School families.

Standard 5 - Sharing Power

Mableton Elementary PTA

South Cobb Council

Mableton Elementary PTA provides an annual survey to our parents and one to our staff to try to gauge interest for future programs. We always ask for feedback about all of our programs to try to engage parents and make our programs better.

Garrison Mill Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

GMPTA invites everyone to be a part of our great organization. We work with our membership chairs to get every child represented. The GMPTA earned the GA PTA Platinum and Oak Tree awards this year. We also encourage members to be involved in leadership and decision making. We have over fifty volunteers on our board of directors. We hold monthly meetings where we listen to what is going on, any concerns, and what assistance is needed. All of our activities, meetings, and events are well attended by our executive team and we help where we are needed. We also thank our volunteers on a regular basis during meetings and in our newsletter. The GMPTA knows that student success does not happen without the input, time, and talents of all our families working together and we are happy to be part of the team.

Sope Creek Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

In these tough economic times, "being there" experiences such as field trips have been cut to a bare minimum. The Sope Creek Elementary School PTA recognizes the need for students to become active learners by having hands on activities. Principal Martha Whalen and the PTA's Enrichment Committee, Health and Nutrition Committee, Education and Literacy Committee, Diversity Committee, Child Safety Committee, Exceptional Children Committee and Environmental Committee work together to bring the field trips to the school. The PTA provides many educational programs such as The Mad Scientist, 3rd and 4th grade Science Days, Multiple Intelligence Day during an early release day, International Week and Festival, Art Day, and many more. Working with administration to enhance the school curriculum, our students receive numerous hands on experiences which are beneficial to their learning and growth.

East Side Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

A new avenue for sharing power this year was the inclusion of PTA leaders in the school's **Key Design Teams**. These teams focus on critical areas such as curriculum, technology, school culture and community. Being a part of these allowed us to better understand the priorities of our faculty and better align programs in support of those goals. For instance, one of the focus areas was fostering inclusion and celebrating diversity. PTA hosted an International Festival to showcase the many cultures that are represented at our school. Families of all nationalities ate together and watched performances by children from several countries.

Additionally, faculty serve on several PTA Committees including Appropriations, Health & Wellness, Science and Website. Because of the support of many teachers, we enjoyed the largest number of entries for the Reflections program this year (110) and our Science Fair continues to grow as well.

Kincaid Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

“Kincaid PTA: Parents and Teachers Growing Our Future” is our theme, illustrated with a growing-tree logo. We receive continual positive feedback from administrators and teachers that we have been successful at reaching out to them this year. This year, our school system has faced many controversial decisions that have raised public outcry; several of our parents have attended and even spoken at public forums on these topics. We view this participation as a success for our PTA and an example of how we educate our parents to have a voice and a share in educational power. PTA has a liaison on School Council, and we have teacher representation on our Board. And, although we are not required to do so, we have a Parent and Family Involvement Policy, which is posted on the school’s website, along with our PTA site.

Hightower Trail Middle PTSA

East Cobb County Council

The many organizations at Hightower Trail **share power** to benefit all students. . As a PTSA we strongly support all of the activities and resources offered by our Husky Foundation and our School Council. A representative from our Board sits on the Foundation Board and regularly attends School council meetings. The PTSA Co-Presidents regularly attend the administration’s ‘Building Leadership Training’ meetings (an open forum to discuss the best ways to develop the school and enhance education). Our Principal and a Faculty Representative attend our monthly Board of Director meetings. And, our Grants Committee benefits from having a Faculty Representative to act as liaison between the faculty and the PTSA during the decision making process of approving grant requests. Another example of sharing power, the wonderful relationship that our Parent and Family Involvement committee has fostered with the school’s Guidance Department enhancing the already wonderful resources available to our students and families.

Standard 6 - Collaborating With Community

Mableton Elementary PTA

South Cobb Council

Mableton Elementary PTA tries to maintain strong ties with our community. This year we did a local food drive that would more directly benefit families in our neighborhood. We collected over 1,000 cans for a collection point just one block from our school. It helped the students and parents see the immediate needs being met by our efforts.

Kennesaw Mountain High PTSA

Tom Mathis, Sr. Council

An active participant with the KMHS community, our PTSA has been involved with several programs that benefit both our school and our community. As part of a joint council with our neighboring schools, our PTSA routinely collaborates with our feeder schools to find solutions for common problems and to develop programs that help students and the community. The KMHS PTSA sends a weekly newsletter to the KMHS community; this newsletter not only announces upcoming events at the school, but it also contains articles that are intended to convey helpful information for parents and other citizens in the area. Along with other schools in the Tom Mathis council, our PTSA helps to sponsor the Giving Tree which collects and distributes clothing for needy families. A new initiative our PTSA is sponsoring this year is a book drive to collect new or gently used summer reading books to distribute to students who can't afford to buy their own copies.

Our PTSA also assists with several community outreach programs. Recently, the KMHS PTSA sponsored and organized an accident avoidance workshop for young drivers as a service to the Kennesaw community. Another service organized by our PTSA is offering SAT prep classes for high school students each semester during the evenings and on Saturdays. Additionally, our PTSA has been instrumental in finding community partners to serve as character education instructors at Kennesaw Mountain, and the organization has helped plan and organize our participation in the county Relay for Life program. The PTSA also assists with the county-wide special education dance each February at KMHS and with Shop with a Mustang, the program that raises money and sponsors a shopping day for needy elementary-aged children before the Christmas holiday. Kennesaw Mountain High School has been recognized by *Atlanta Magazine* as a school that is dedicated to community service; without our PTSA's involvement, we would not have achieved that level of success in our community.

Garrison Mill PTA

East Cobb County Council

This year we helped our students better understand the importance of good citizenship in the community. We worked closely with our student council, scout groups, and Partners in Education to make our community a better place to live. We held a school supply drive for Clarksdale, a Halloween candy drive for kids with cancer, a canned food drive for M.U.S.T. Ministries, and a holiday gift and coat drive for our sister school, Milford Elementary.

We are partnered with the "Clean Air Campaign" and this year we have become 1 of 5 Cobb County schools to partner with "Safe Routes to School". We have held activities and done surveys to raise awareness of these groups. Later this month we will be holding our first "RIDE THE BUS TO SCHOOL DAY". It will be held in conjunction with the state's "Smog Alert" week and Earth Day. We

have invited these two partners to join us for the festivities. Every child who arrives to school on the bus will be greeted by our schools mascot, Gary the Greyhound, the Clean Air Bear and they will receive prizes from both partners. The press has also been invited to this activity. We are hopeful that this will be a fun and successful event that can be continued in future years.

Sope Creek Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

The Sope Creek Elementary School PTA includes our community in our annual food, snack, and book drives for our sister school. Advertising on the school marquee announce donation opportunities. We open the doors for donations from the entire community to make the drives successful. The SCPTA Education and Literacy annual book swap is a great way for families and neighbors to share and donate books. Each student brings in slightly used books and is granted points for the amount of books they donate. The books are sorted by grade level and the students use their points to “buy” books at the book swap. The students get books which are new to them, the families and neighbors get to recycle used books, and our sister school also receives a generous donation of gently used books.

Mt. Bethel Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

Our most significant community resources were our eight Partners in Education: Savannah Court, Bank of North Georgia, KidChess, Blake Cooper Productions, the Avenue at East Cobb (Cousins Property, Inc.), Northeast Cobb YMCA, Kroger at Parkaire, and Peachtree Gymnastics & More. Our partners were representative of the community as a whole. Together, they provided Mt. Bethel with community perspective as well as financial support, food items, educational information, showcase opportunities for student artwork, and publicity for our projects, programs, and special events. Aside from the material benefits our Partners provided, valuable insight was gained from the model of school and community collaboration.

East Side Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

East Side staff and PTA work to connect the school with community resources. We have formal partnerships with 11 local businesses to support PTA and school programs and events. We hosted a homework and study-skills workshop for 4th and 5th graders and their parents with a local educational center and sponsored **three** parenting skills workshops led by Kirk Martin of Celebrate Calm. These were held in the fall and early spring in different locations and were open to the community.

Another part of our collaboration efforts is to bring families and partners together to give back to the community. We collect donations of school supplies, books and toys to give to our sister school, Fair Oaks Elementary and also gather food and toy donations for local outreach efforts. We have invited the principal of Fair Oaks to be our special guest speaker at our May general membership meeting.

Kincaid Elementary PTA

East Cobb County Council

We have an extremely involved and supportive family base, as evidenced by our being a PTA School of Excellence for Parent Involvement. Our families turn out in droves to support community events such as the East Cobber Parade, Hands On Atlanta Day and Earth Day clean up, in conjunction with the Clean

Air Campaign; our school's fall Walk to School Day was featured in a recent CAC newsletter! We actively solicit information from feeder & neighboring schools about their programs, which we publicize for everyone's benefit. By establishing these relationships, we are helping our families ease the transitions to middle and high school campuses. We work with the school's Partners in Education, such as with our Family Fitness Night. We enhanced our Business Sponsor Membership campaign this year, with positive results. We held our first BOD meeting at a local Korean church as a community outreach opportunity.

Hightower Trail Middle PTSA

East Cobb County Council

Our PTSA practices '**collaborating with the community**'. Our Partners in Education support school events and projects. We benefit from a vast catalogue of partnerships within the community available to us through community wide partnership programs like Partners in Education and through a strong network of parents and alumni set on a path to promote success for every child at Hightower Trail MS. When the time arrived to host a school wide celebration of our national recognition in excellence through the Blue Ribbon Schools Program, our partners assisted our PTSA Hospitality Committee with a wonderful cake large enough to feed over 1000 students and faculty. When our Administration fulfilled a desire to construct an outside classroom for student learning, our PTSA offered refreshments donated by Partners in Education and our parents to the volunteers (parents and partners) constructing this new outdoor addition. In an on-going collaboration, our new Gardening Committee working in conjunction with a spouse of a Hightower Trail teacher (who so happens to be a Partner in Education) to establish beautiful and educational gardens around our school.