



Best Ideas from Local Units 2010/2011



Communications

Sope Creek Elementary joined the social network world in 2010 by creating its own Facebook page. The ***Sope Creek Sun*** is an online blog created, written and edited by students, for students. Overseen by PTA volunteers, the staff of 4th and 5th graders informed its audience of school events, profiled teachers, contributed book reviews and much more! (National Standards: Communicating Effectively, Supporting Student Success)

Walton High School added a ***Freshman Insert*** to its first newsletter of the year which gave these students and parents valuable information about the school and the role PTSA plays there. (National Standards: Communicating Effectively, Supporting Student Success)

Walton PTSA also conducted a **teacher survey** at the end of the 2009-10 school year. Several changes were made based upon this feedback that increased teacher morale (e.g., parents monitoring students during teacher luncheons, wish lists for supplies). The PTSA hosted a luncheon and presented the changes to the teachers. (National Standards: Communicating Effectively, Sharing Power)

Note: Several PTAs/PTSAs have converted to an all-digital newsletter system, eliminating paper copies. This not only saves paper and reduces costs, but enables the PTAs to share more information and include color photos with no cost increase. Others mentioned re-tooling their E-news to be more organized, concise and relevant.



Community Outreach

In collaboration with fellow ECCC PTA school Powers Ferry Elementary, Dickerson Middle School changed its annual toy drive to a **game drive** so that every child at Powers Ferry received a game to take home over the winter break. The goal was to increase family time and encourage more family activities. Dickerson families contributed 550 games which allowed each student at Powers Ferry to receive one game and also resulted in games being donated to the ASP program at Clay Elementary. (National Standards: Collaborating with Community)

Dodgen Middle School sponsored a **"Dodgen Gives Back Day"**, which was held on the last day of school prior to the winter holiday break. This is a multi-faceted program, involving the PTSA along with teachers & administration to organize multiple activities. These activities included charity drives for three different outreach organizations. Students wrote letters to their choice of recipients - local firemen, policemen, or military personnel currently serving overseas. The students also created hundreds of placemats and wreaths that the PTSA distributed to area nursing home residents, school children in Haiti and the military. In addition, "Soles for Souls" also benefited from the charity drive. The students and the teachers loved the day and the students spent time *thinking* of others as well as *doing* for others. (National Standards: Collaborating with Community)



Diversity & Inclusion

East Side Elementary made extra efforts to welcome non-English speaking parents to school by having its Meet & Greet literature translated into 4 different languages (with the help of the International Welcome Center). East Side also hosted **"American Schools 101"** early in the school year. The program is open to all families, but specifically geared towards those new to the American school system. Interpreters are on hand as PTA, school and Foundation

leaders present an overview of the CCSD, the school and education policies. Families are invited to join PTA that evening. (National Standard: Welcoming All Families)

The Diversity & Inclusion Committee at Sope Creek Elementary has taken the mission of “welcoming all families” to heart, implementing programs that celebrate and engage its diverse families. It held a **Cultural Summit** for administrators and faculty, which offered the opportunity to participate in an open and honest discussion of the cultures that comprise its school community with a panel of parents and community members from each of those cultures. This program helped to directly involve culturally diverse families and enlighten teachers and staff. (National Standards: Welcoming All Families, Speaking Up for Every Child, Collaborating with Community)

Hightower Trail Middle School delivered **weekly diversity moments** via the morning announcements. (National Standards: Welcoming All Families, Speaking Up for Every Child)



Education & Literacy

Mt Bethel Elementary coordinated a **book swap in conjunction with Read Across America Week**. For every 2 books that a student brought in, s/he received a coupon redeemable for one book. All extra books were donated to Mt Bethel’s sister school. (National Standard: Supporting Student Success, Collaborating with Community)

In order to encourage higher level thinking and improve children’s writing skills, Timber Ridge Elementary produced a **Literary Publication**. The book contained short stories, journal entries and poems written by every student in grades 3-5. The PTA, principal and a Partner in Education collaborated to absorb the cost of publishing so that every family received a copy. (National Standards: Supporting Student Success, Collaborating with Community)

Dickerson Middle School sponsored the **SAT Word of the Week**. The Literacy Committee selected one SAT word for each week and different activities for each day included:

Monday - The SAT word is presented on the front of 24”x12” piece of white paper in deep blue thick marker. The pronunciation is under the word.

Tuesday - The word, pronunciation and definition

Wednesday – the word, pronunciation, definition and part of speech

Thursday - the word, pronunciation, definition, part of speech and synonyms/antonyms

Friday - the word, pronunciation, definition, part of speech, synonyms/antonyms and an 8th grade sentence.

This was promoted through the media center and the television announcements every day. The teachers then had their classes “sponsor” a word by supplying the sentences, synonyms and different meanings/usage of the word. Everyone at school was involved in the Word of the Week! This can also be easily adapted for elementary school and high school. (National Standards: Supporting Student Success)

Dickerson Middle School celebrated **National Poetry Month** with a three-part project initiated and implemented by the Literacy Chair at Dickerson MS with significant participation by the Media Specialist.

Poetry books and online sources were used to find poems from various poetry categories (i.e. limericks, sonnets, haikus, ballads, loop poems, etc.) with wide-ranging topics for the **poetry challenge**. The poems were copied, enlarged and backed with colored paper. Each poem was cut in half with the title on the top of the page and the author on the bottom of the page. The poems were secured on different sides of the media center and the students had a poetry search. Different poems were used for the 6th grade and 7th grade; about 40 poems total were used.

The Media Specialist conducted a poetry lesson for the classes that signed up for the poetry challenge. The Literacy Chair and the Media Specialist solicited poems from the teachers. These were copied, enlarged, mounted, and laminated and then found poems for different departments - PE, band, the nurse, guidance, business, computer lab, math, science, social studies, etc. The poetry is hung outside the classrooms. Announcements were made regarding finding the poetry around school. (National Standards: Supporting Student Success)



Environmental Education

Timber Ridge Elementary celebrated **Recycle, Reduce, Reuse Week** in the fall. During the week, the EEC asked each student to bring in clean soda cans and plastic water bottles. Each grade had to collect 750 items in order to adopt an endangered species from the World Wildlife Fund. The students surpassed their goal and the school was able to adopt 13 manatees and 14 sea turtles. Learning material was provided to incorporate facts about how

the Gulf Coast oil spill impacted the region and indigenous wildlife. The EEC also hosted a **Poet-Tree Contest** in honor of Arbor Day where 2-5th graders were invited to submit a poem. Winners read their poems during morning announcements. There was a corresponding poster contest for kindergarten and 1st graders. (National Standards: Supporting Student Success, Collaborating with Community)

East Side Elementary established a student-focused environmental club called “**Planet Patrollers**” this year. 4th and 5th graders were invited to submit an essay expressing their concerns for the environment in order to be considered for the club. The club met on a monthly basis before school began and Patrollers participated in Recycle Fridays, a litter pick up, “walking field trip” to East Cobb Park and other green activities. (National Standard: Supporting Student Success)

Mt Bethel Elementary hosted its annual **Trashy Art Show** in conjunction with American Recycles Day in November. Students create art masterpieces from recycled materials or other household discards. Everyone receives recognition for participating and the creations are displayed for all to appreciate. A reception is held for all participants and their families where winners are announced. (National Standard: Supporting Student Success)



Family Engagement

Tritt Elementary is proud of its new, successful **D.U.D.E.S.** Program. **Dads Using Days to Encourage Students.** This program encourages the involvement of dads and grandfathers in their students’ education. At least one “dude” was on campus every day to do a variety of activities, including classroom assistance and administrative support. The children loved it, and dads have achieved “rock star” status. (National Standards: Welcoming All Families, Supporting Student Success)

Mt Bethel Elementary held a new event this year – **Family Fun Night.** The PTA charged \$5/person that covered a bingo card, pizza and drink. A silent auction was also held with most items donated by teachers and local businesses. The event was sold out and everyone had a great time. The event raised almost \$5,000. (National Standards: Welcoming All Families)

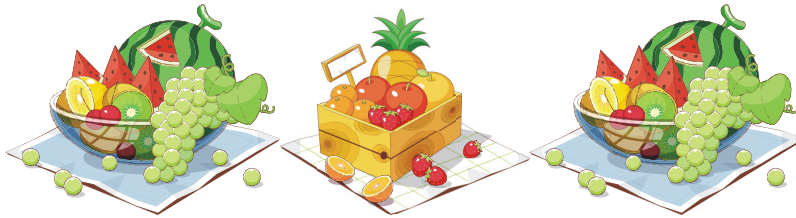
Nicholson Elementary School instituted a free ***Volunteer Ice Cream Social*** at school this year. Ice Cream Sundaes and activities for the children were provided while parents were encouraged to visit the gymnasium where tables were set up with various volunteer opportunities available. Current volunteers manned the tables in order to provide information and answer any and all questions. Sign up sheets were provided for people who were interested in a particular area and they were then personally contacted regarding their interest following the event. (National Standard: Welcoming All Families)

Garrison Mill Elementary School continued its ***F.B.I. (Fathers Being Involved)*** program but, took it to another level this year by implementing an additional Board of Directors position called "F.B.I. Director". This created a specific Board position for a male, which diversified the Board, and also encouraged this person to attend the regular PTA Board Meetings and incorporate the PTA goals & initiatives into the F.B.I. program. This positively impacted Garrison Mill's Family Engagement, Health & Nutrition, Membership & Advocacy Committee Programs. The number of F.B.I. members doubled and have shown as part of this National PTA initiative that fatherhood leadership can be contagious. (National Standard: Welcoming All Families)

East Cobb Middle School enjoyed a very successful ***Rising 6th Grade Dinner/Information Session*** in February. 5th grade students and their families from all 5 feeder schools, private schools and home school pre-paid for dinner and were greeted by cheerleaders and the Chick-Fil-A mascot. They were then treated to performances by the ECMS band, orchestra, choir and dance group during dinner. Information was shared by PTSA, Foundation, athletics and other school organizations. PTSA volunteer forms were made available. The administration and 6th grade team then presented in the auditorium and a tour followed. What a great way to take the mystery out of Middle School in advance! (National Standards: Welcoming All Families, Communicating Effectively, Supporting Student Success, Speaking Up for Every Child)

Walton High School created a ***Last Minute Donations Helper*** volunteer position to connect with those parents who are already strapped for time, but still might be available to help on a one-time basis. The PTA received a huge response and it actually led to people signing up for committees full time once they see how easy, fun and stress-free it is! (National Standard: Welcoming All Families)

Wheeler High School created a ***welcome packet*** for parents and students new to the Wheeler community. This packet included a welcome letter from the principal and PTSA presidents, volunteer information, PTSA membership form and a quick reference guide titled "10 Things Every Wheeler Parent/student Should Know." Parts of the packet have been translated into Spanish and Portuguese. (National Standard: Welcoming All Families, Speaking Up for Every Child)



Health & Wellness

Kincaid Elementary hosted a **Family Fitness Night** during Healthy Choices Week. The goal was to show families how to have fun together in healthy ways. By partnering with several of the school's Partners In Education, local businesses, and school families, they were able to offer fitness venues including martial arts, yoga, Bike Safety, healthy cooking and family exercise activities. Over 150 families participated in this first time event and feed back was all positive. (National Standards: Supporting Student Success, Collaborating with Community)

Sope Creek Elementary started a **morning exercise club** which is co-sponsored by its Dad's club. Check out <http://vimeo.com/21227849> to view. (National Standards: Supporting Student Success)

Families attending Dickerson Middle School's Meet & Greet were given the opportunity to purchase a **hygiene pack** for a \$9 donation. The PTA leadership was pleasantly surprised when nearly 300 families participated, raising over \$2,700. Due to effective shopping, the amount of supplies per teacher increased. As the PTA and staff agreed, if students are learning in a healthy and clean environment, there will be a fewer days missed due to illness. (National Standards: Supporting Student Success)



Legislation & Advocacy

The Mt Bethel Elementary Legislative Committee hosted a **morning coffee** for newly-elected CCSD Board Member Scott Sweeney and families. (National Standard: Speaking up for Every Child, Sharing Power)

Walton High School held a **student voter registration drive** where over 100 students registered to vote. (National Standard: Speaking up for Every Child)



Membership

Mt Bethel Elementary sent home **pre-order forms** in April with a letter outlining how PTA funds were spent for the year and also detailing important dates for the upcoming school year - back to school meetings as well as volunteer sign-ups, membership forms, etc. Membership goals were easily reached by this communication method. (National Standard: Speaking Up for Every Child, Sharing Power)

Hightower Trail Middle School also introduced a pre-registration form in the spring which helped its PTSA reach 100% of its target membership by August. Additional memberships were sold at Open House nights and throughout the year. It then implemented the **“Got 4 More”** Georgia PTA membership campaign and was recognized for its efforts.



Youth Services

Mt Bethel Elementary emphasized **character education** this year. Volunteers worked with the school counselors to reward students that exhibited good character. Classes voted for 1 student per class that exemplified that month’s character theme. The students’ pictures were displayed on a character banner in the hallway. (National Standard: Supporting Student Success, Speaking Up for Every Child)

Hightower Trail Middle School hosted an **Honors Reception** three times during the year he Principal Honor Roll students and their families.(National Standard: Supporting Student Success, Welcoming All Families)

Hightower Trail Middle School maintained a ***Student and Parent Resource Library*** in its guidance center. This library contains over 100 books that address the behavioral and educational needs of middle schoolers and is available to check-out. It also contains pamphlets and other literature to help parents understand teenage issues. (National Standards: Welcoming All Families, Supporting Student Success, Speaking Up for Every Child)

Hightower also held an informal parent discussion group with Jeff Dess where parents could discuss any of their concerns. This led to a ***“Tips for Parents”*** section in its weekly eblasts-which is aided by Jeff Dess. (National Standards: Welcoming All Families, Supporting Student Success, Speaking Up for Every Child).

Walton High School implemented an ***Accident Avoidance Workshop*** for teen drivers and their parents. (National Standard: Supporting Student Success)