

District 9 PTA

2014-2015



9th District

PTA[®]

everychild.onevoice.[®]

BEST IDEAS FROM 2015



Membership Tables – Offered two locations for membership during Meet & Greet – one in the Main Hall and one in the 6th Grade Annex which brought membership closer to where families actually visited. Also set up a membership table at the Rising 6th Grade Camp over the summer, two tables at Back to School nights and offered two opportunities for staff to join – PTSA-sponsored preplanning luncheon and before Meet & Greet. (East Cobb MS, ECCC, Standard #1, 2, 4)

Free Popcorn– All PTA members received a coupon for a free popcorn and drink at the Fall Festival. There was a “staffed” membership table at the festival to sign up new members. (Eastvalley ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 4, 6)

Online Resources – School-related transactions were brought online to a “Toolkit” and credit card payments accepted. Parents purchased pre-sale items through the kit, including memberships, spiritwear, directories, calendars, etc. Contact information and directory information now stored online, making updates easy and “real time.” The directory also included business PTA members. Parents indicate volunteer preferences on the Toolkit which has better matched volunteer needs with interest and boosted overall family engagement. RSVPs for many PTA events are handled online enabling more accurate planning. Overall, this process has streamlined the pre-sale process, improved record-keeping, saved man hours and made Meet & Greet run smoother. (Mt. Bethel ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 2, 5,6)

Business Sponsorship Packages – After reviewing the prior year’s budget, the PTA realized that in order to fulfill its mission, it needed to look outside of its families for support. Three Business Sponsorship levels were created with varying levels of exposure at school and PTA events. This resulted in 8 Platinum (\$1,000) Sponsors and 8 Silver (\$250) sponsorships. No Gold (\$500) levels were sold. Community members who wished to communicate a short-term opportunity like a camp were invited to become members to enjoy that access to the membership. (Murdock ES, ECCC, Standard # 6)

Reserved Parking – Due to limited parking, visitors must park down the street during events and programs. The PTA drew from the membership list to give 2 members a “reserved” parking spot for the event. (Eastvalley ES, ECCC, Standard #1)

Businesses as Members and Volunteers – Local businesses were offered the opportunity to join the PTSA and were included in an electronic business directory and encouraged to find a way to volunteer. These community volunteers assisted the counselors with Georgia 411 enrollment, as well as volunteering at events and contributing donations for staff. (Moses MS, PCC, Standard #6)



Ambassador Committee – Conducted monthly tours of the school to families new to the area. During these tours, visitors learned the basics of the curriculum and scheduling, as well as information about extracurricular activities. The committee also connects families with appropriate school staff. Approximately 40 families toured the campus this year. (Dickerson MS, ECCC, Standard #1. Also Mt Bethel ES and Tritt ES, ECCC)

Newcomer Reception – Recognizing that a school of this size (over 1,200 middle school students) can feel overwhelming, the Newcomer Committee organized a breakfast for new families which was attended by over 80 families. The PTSA, Foundation and principal delivered personal welcoming messages and fielded questions. (Dickerson MS, ECCC, Standard #1. Also Mt Bethel ES, Murdock ES, Tritt ES and Hightower Trail MS, ECCC)

Multilanguage Welcome Sign – After discovering that their families spoke 15 different languages, the PTSA budgeted for a welcome sign that read “Welcome to Hightower Trail Middle School” in all of the languages. (Hightower Trail MS, ECCC, Standard #1)

Building a Family Friendly School –The PTSA submitted its application for the National PTA Schools of Excellence program and survey results indicated a desire to engage families and the community in supporting academic success for all students. With the physical campus under construction, the PTSA chose the “Building” theme to emphasize building family engagement. Activities included creating a centralized online resource of study and research aids to supplement classroom teaching, providing a coffee for rising 9th grade parents, changing international lunch celebrations to an international night in order to include working families, assisting with Georgia Apply to College Day and exploring community mentor and tutoring options for at-risk students. (Wheeler HS, ECCC, Standard #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

Collaborating with Counselors – In addition to promoting the school-based bullying prevention program, Red Ribbon Week activities and “Mix It Up Day,” the PTSA sponsored 2 speakers – Jeff Dess who covered information about appropriate uses of cell phones, cyberbullying, texting and apps and Celebrate Calm where founder Kirk Martin and his son provided families and teachers with strategies that eliminate defiance, disrespect, yelling, fighting and more. Lastly, the PTSA supported Career Day where families had the opportunity to come to school and share information about their careers and the education/training required for those professions. (Hightower Trail MS, ECCC, Standard #3, 4, 5)

Supporting Learning by Engaging Families – The PTA brought in Dr. Tim Elmore, an expert in growing leaders and understanding the challenges facing this generation of students. He worked with the staff during the school day and then provided an insightful parenting workshop in the evening to over 120 parents. The PTA provided his book to the first 100 families registered to support their understanding of the philosophy behind the school’s methods of encouragement and discipline. With a school-wide focus on math, the PTA hired a nationally known math speaker – Greg Tang – to collaborate with the school community. In 2 days, Mr. Tang worked with each grade level (students and teachers) as

well as parents to better understand math standards and how to make math fun! An important follow-up is using Mr. Tang's online resources in classrooms and at home. Mr. Tang is scheduled to return in September 2015. (East Side ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 2, 3, 4,6)

S'more Volunteers – The PTA showed its appreciation to volunteers by making a little favor for them that said “We need S'more volunteers like you” with a little s'more kit attached that it found on Pinterest. (Blackwell ES, ECCC, Standard #1)

Hispanic Outreach – The PTA implemented a new policy that required all PTA forms be translated into Spanish to send home to Hispanic families. The newly created Hispanic Liaison assisted with translations. Additionally, Hispanic PTA Nights were held throughout the year to assist these parents with understanding school policies, how to conduct conferences and preparation for standardized testing. The PTA paid for bus transportation for 2 nights. Childcare also was provided. (Cheatham Hill ES, TMC, Standard #1)

Coffee Talks – Held quarterly in conjunction with the administration, these provided a forum for families to hear timely and relevant information from administrators. Rising 6th grade parents were invited to the last talk, held in the spring. (Dodgen MS, ECCC, Standard #1) Various other schools also hosted a “chat with the principal”.

Carpool Duty – Coordinated parent volunteers, including FBI (Fellas Being Involved) to handle carpool duties on Fridays to give the staff a break. On inclement weather days, the PTA provided hand warmers and hot beverages. (Kincaid ES, ECCC, Standard #1)

Principal Coffees – Held by numerous school communities/PTAs in the morning to accommodate working parents' schedules, these events were used to welcome new families, share information about school improvement plans, discuss school goals, policies, procedures, new state testing guidelines and expectations, new teacher evaluation standards, school district structure (IE2 for Cobb County), informal Q&A, etc. (Standard #1)

Family Events – the PTSA hosted a Saturday picnic for Hispanic families where Spanish-speaking mentors were present to translate information from the PTSA and facilitate a Q&A between families and PTSA leaders. Additionally, the PTSA hosted a free concert for all families. The entertainment was provided by the PTSA and families brought a picnic meal and were able to gather with friends, relax and listen to music together on the school lawn. Families were invited to bring a dish reflective of their culture or heritage to share with other families after the 2nd general PTSA meeting. The PTSA provided all the paper goods. (Marietta Center for Advanced Academics, MCC, Standard #1)

Parent Classes – Held in both English and Spanish, these classes taught parents how to navigate the school system website to be informed about grades, lessons, attendance and upcoming assignments. Evening events included a math night, cultural diversity night, presentations on health and safety issues, and team-building exercise such as engineering challenges similar to those used by teachers in the classroom. Additional classes were offered monthly to Spanish-speaking families to communicate important topics such as how to navigate the American school system – where/how to express a concern, how to use web-based tools, how to get questions answered – and other pertinent topics so they feel empowered to fully help their student. PTA memberships among these families doubled as

well as attendance at meetings and events. (Marietta Center for Advanced Academics, MCC, Standard #1,3, 4)

Summits – Encouraged by their administration, the PTSA scheduled a Parent Summit event where families could learn how to better support their students and the school. The event was advertised via emails, flyers, text messaging and calling posts. Topics included free resources, volunteer opportunities, school strategic plan, Positive Student Recognition, AP classes, and an overview of the PTSA. Approximately 100 students were positively impacted because of their parent’s attendance. A Math Summit was developed where parents experienced a math classroom setting and the iReady analysis of their child’s math skills were also made available. Parents signed up for tutoring if needed and were given a 4-year math plan for staying on track with math credits. Lastly, a virtual roundtable was scheduled which would allow parents to hear information about the school, ask questions and interact with the principal without needing to be at the school. The webinar was accessed from smartphone, tablet, laptop and desktop. While there were some technical difficulties at first, 50 parents were able to participate. (South Cobb HS, SCC, Standard #1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Volunteer Bulletin Board – In order to take advantage of family volunteers coming to campus, PTA Committee chairs maintained a bulletin board in the entry hall that advertised and promoted upcoming events. (Sope Creek ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 5)

Welcome Kit – The front office provided a quarterly report of new families to the PTA Membership Committee which then sent a “Welcome Kit” with information about joining PTA and volunteering at school. (Sope Creek ES, ECCC, Standard #1)

Surveys – A volunteer survey was distributed to all families prior to Meet & Greet to share volunteer opportunities with PTA, Foundation and the school. The survey included a QR code link for ease of access. Family and teacher surveys were also conducted to determine that the school’s STEM certification was the priority for fundraising. Based on this response, a new school/community fundraiser – “Fox Trot Fun Run” was created. (Shallowford Falls ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 2, 3, 5,6)

Kindergarten Popsicle Party & Picnic – This activity was held for incoming kindergarten students and families before school started. The playground was opened and students were greeted with a frozen treat. Class lists were available for viewing and all the kindergarten teachers came and were able to have a casual and fun meeting with their students while the children got to play at the new “big school.” (Sope Creek ES, ECCC, Standard #1. Also Murdock ES, ECCC)

We are Family – The PTA decorated a bulletin board with pictures of teachers, administrators, PTA and Foundation families. Meet & Greet was extended an additional hour (to 7pm) to accommodate working families. The directory was online so new families could easily be added and information is always “real time.” The system also enabled parents to install an app on their mobile device, making the Directory portable and easy to access. Regular and open communication between PTA and Foundation was also a priority area, ensuring that efforts and resources are used in the most efficient manner. (Sope Creek, ECCC, Standard #2, 5)

Three for Me – The PTA used this National PTA-sponsored program to promote and track volunteer hours. Each month a winner was selected and receives a prize (typically donated from a community business). The Volunteer Coordinator manages the tracking of this program. (Kincaid ES, ECCC, Standard #1. Also, Murdock ES sponsored a similar program entitled “Give Me 5” to promote giving 5 volunteer hours.)



Legislative & Advocacy

Education Panel – The Legislative & Advocacy Committee organized this well attended forum, which featured the district Superintendent, as well as education policy experts from the Georgia Budget & Policy Institute and Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. Held in the Media Center during a weekday morning, each speaker had 10-15 minutes for his/her presentation which was followed by a Q&A session. (Mt Bethel ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 4, 6)

Mock Election – Third, fourth and fifth graders were able to cast votes for three races – Governor, US Senate and State Superintendent. The election took place at polling stations in the cafeteria prior to the start of the school day. Prior to the election, fliers were sent home describing the process and encouraging families to discuss the election with the students. There was even a mock run-off! (Kincaid ES, ECCC, Standard #3, 4. Also Mtn View ES, ECCC)



Educational Enrichment

Reading & Writing Program – After-school program for K-3 that supported unique reading and writing lessons and engaged teaching staff and parent volunteers. Each participant is given steps to follow that involve processing information as well as giving cues to peers. (Kincaid ES, ECCC, Standard #3, 5)

Challenger Publishing – This program was kicked off after author visits to take advantage of students’ heightened interest in creating a published story. During this time, parent volunteers helped students edit stories and illustrations to prepare them for publication in a hard cover story book that remains on permanent display in the media center. (Mt Bethel ES, ECCC, Standard #3)

Art Appreciation/Art Print - A parent volunteer gathered the Art print lesson and taught a lesson about a visual artist to students. The PTA provided materials and each class was encouraged to have an Art Print Coordinator volunteer. (Eastvalley ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 3)

Reflections Workshops – In order to increase participation, the PTA offered after school workshops (one session for K-2 and one session for 3-5). Each session began with a

discussion about the theme and supplies were distributed to create visual arts entries. This was an opportunity to help students understand the Reflections program and spark interest in other categories. A musician, a painter and a photographer visited the workshops to share tips to help students create pieces of art. (W.C. Abney ES, PCC, Standard #3, 4, 6)

Character Education – All staff members awarded a die-cut COUGAR (school mascot) to students that they witnessed demonstrating the character trait of the quarter. The recipients (name and good deed) were placed on a bulletin board and celebrated by the principal and counselors at a special breakfast. (Kincaid ES, ECCC, Standard #3, 4)

Character Counts – Students and teachers could nominate a student who was caught performing a random act of kindness. Twice a month, the PTSA selected a winner from the nomination box and these students received a small prize such as spirit wear or breakfast item. All students were eligible to be nominated and these small acts of kindness turned into big benefits such as increased self-esteem and positive behavior. (Pope HS, ECCC, Standard #4, 5) Also, Caught In the Act or “CIA” program whereby students were awarded a ticket when CIA. They were recognized on announcements (JJ Daniell MS, ECCC, Standard #3)

Supporting Student Success – The PTA supported iXL, an online math program where students are able to access the site at home and earn “rewards” for improving their skills and completing objectives. New this year, the PTA supported Study Island (an online resource) and Wordly Wise which is a vocabulary-building program for grades 1-5. The PTA co-sponsored a STEM night (including the Star Lab) and LEGO build night as well as held its 2nd annual Science Fair. (Varner ES, SCC, Standard #1, 3, 4, 6)

Summer Media Center Days – The PTA allocated funds from its Academic Enhancement budget to support keeping the Media Center open through the summer. Families were welcome to come check out books and have reading clubs over the summer. An overwhelming amount of positive feedback from families and Media Center staff who felt the program kept children engaged while promoting a time for families to gather together. (Sope Creek ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 3, 5)

Visiting Author – Arts in Education didn’t stop at the elementary school level! This year, the PTSA helped to sponsor a visit by author Brian Doyle. In preparation, student read a number of his works prior to the visit and he spent time with students in upper-level English classes. At night, the PTSA hosted an “An Evening with Brian Doyle” and invited the entire community to hear from this author. (Lassiter HS, ECCC, Standard #3)

Red ‘e’ Campaign, took place during Red Ribbon Week that emphasizes making good choices so students will be “read-e” (ready) for whatever comes their way. The school was decorated with giant red e’s and posters, white key chains with a red ‘e’ were distributed and random prize patrols awarded prizes to those students and faculty that were displaying the keychain. Also included an interactive station. (Lassiter HS, ECCC, Standard #3)



Health & Wellness

Lunch Lady Hero Day – Fun activities for students, staff and cafeteria workers to show how much they are appreciated and how important they are to the health and well-being of the children. Activities included drawing pictures of favorite school meal/ school nutrition staff person, creating milk carton vases and presenting them to each school nutrition staff member, creating “lunch lady” comics and teachers and students creating “thank you” pizzas. (A.L. Burruss ES, MCC, Standard #3)

Munch a Healthy Lunch Week – The Health & Wellness Committee contacted local businesses to ask for donations of healthy snacks for children to sample. Sampling tables were set up the cafeteria every day to allow students to try new fruits, veggies and snacks. Participants got to rate the items with a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down”. (Shallowford Falls ES, ECCC, Standard #3,6)



Diversity & Inclusion

Exceptional Children – Recognition expanded from 1 day to 1 week in order to build greater awareness and understanding of these students’ unique talents. Themed books were purchased for each class and after reading the books, students completed an activity that highlighted the exceptional talent in the story. Students also wrote about their understanding of the book. The PTA collaborated with administration to create a brochure for parents to explain the many acronyms used by the school system. Finally, various stories were presented on a bulletin board entitled “From Exceptional Children to Exceptional People.” To culminate the week, gift cards were provided to the special education teachers. (Sope Creek, ECCC, Standard #1, 3, 4)

Mix It Up Days – The PTA hosted 3 “Mix It Up Days” over the school year. The cafeteria was decorated with a banner and different colored balloons. Each student was given a different color sticker prior to lunch and when they entered the cafeteria, they sat at the coordinating balloon color. There was a slideshow of conversation starters displayed and the students were encouraged to use these to prompt a conversation with a new friend. (Tritt ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 4, 5)

Special Education Awareness – Based on parent feedback, the PTA decided to address the negative misconceptions of the “co-taught” classroom model where students with special needs become part of the mainstream classroom experience. The Exceptional Children Committee partnered with some Special education teachers to provide an “Inside Track” guest speaker session focused on the inclusion model. Due to popular demand, the session was repeated at a PTA general meeting and will be offered annually going forward. Sope Creek ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 2,3, 4,5)

Diversity – The PTA combined National Inclusive Schools Week with Heritage Week, calling it “You’re Unique Week.” Each day had a different theme, such as “Make Your Mark”, Tuesday – “What are your Strengths?” and so on. The week culminated in the painting of a

mural by local artist promoting the school's character, diversity and uniqueness. (Kincaid ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 3, 4, 6)

Welcome Flags – Recognizing that students hail from 15 different countries, the PTA worked with its administration to identify the native countries. The PTA displayed flags from each of these countries in the front entry and “welcome” in the native language. The families felt more at home seeing something familiar and students realized there is a diverse culture within the school. (W.C. Abney ES, PCC, Standard #1, 2, 4, 6)

Communicating – With over 40 countries represented in the school community, the PTA created a QR code reader for families to scan during parent orientation. The QR was set to take the user to the PTA's Mailchimp sign-up page. The code recognized the user's preferred language on his smart phone and automatically accessed the language and converted the documents into that preferred language. This process resulted in the newsletter being converted into 40 languages. (Bells Ferry ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 2,5)



Community Outreach

Service Council – The PTA Community Outreach Committee and school counselors formed a student-run “Service Council.” This group of 4th and 5th graders (selected by their teachers) met once a month and decided on community outreach projects to be carried out by each grade. The Council was responsible for all logistics of each project including morning announcements, flyers, posters and seeing the projects through to completion. Projects included a tulip bulb drive, clinic supply and school supply drives, Project Mail Call and valentines for a local assisted living center. (Tritt ES, ECCC, Standard #3, 6) Similar to this is a PTA program entitled ***Kids Care*** where the students meet monthly to perform community outreach projects such as cards for senior citizens, caring for animals at local shelters, etc. (Mt Bethel ES, ECCC, Standard #6)

Giving Tree – The PTA provided the school as well as its sister school with a giving tree during the holiday times. This allowed families that are struggling financially to receive help with gifts if they choose. There were a larger number than usual requests this year. The PTA contacted a local partner and asked them to sell “giving snowflakes” to customers. All requests were filled! (Garrison Mill ES, ECCC, Standard #4, 6)

Veterans Day Breakfast – This program featured a video collage with photos of family members who have served or are currently serving our country. The invitation was extended to the entire community, and the PTA was honored to welcome veterans who live nearby but do not have children at the school. These guests were thrilled to be included and they brought amazing stories and perspectives to the breakfast. (Sope Creek ES, ECCC, Standard #1,6)



Collaborating with the Foundation – Co-Presidents of the PTA and Foundation were given an open invitation to the Board meetings of the other organization. These individuals also meet on a regular basis to communicate and coordinate efforts. In addition to an information sheet detailing the 2 organizations and their purposes, the PTA and Foundation team up to produce a video that was shown to parents at Open House. The purpose of the video was to clarify ways that the 2 organizations work separately and together for the benefit of the school. (Sope Creek ES, ECCC, Standard #1, 5, 6)

In-house Fundraiser – The PTA held its 3rd annual “Tritt Tiger Dash” where students raised money for 2 weeks before tackling an obstacle course similar to the Warrior Dash (sandbag relay, tire run, army crawl, balance beam and STEM challenge.) Teachers decided the classroom incentives and there were also school-wide incentives such as a dance party, tailgate party and “sleepover with the principal.” The event raised \$86,000 for the PTA by encouraging students to work together as a team to complete the course and meet class goals. Since this is an in-house program, the PTA keeps 100% of the proceeds. (Tritt ES, ECCC, Standard #3, 5)

THANK YOU
TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS...



WE HOPE MANY OF YOU FIND THESE IDEAS TO BE
INSIGHTFUL AND MOTIVATING