



MANTUA PTA NEWS

www.mantuapta.org

January 2004

Carole Thomas President's Message

Don't Change that Channel!

Picture this...**Luke Perry** walks in and says, "Alright I got a little pop quiz for you. It's about me. What was my zip code? What city was it in? Name three kids I hung out with in the lunchroom. Name three kids your child hangs out with in the lunchroom." Or **Charles Barkley** struts to the camera and says, "I got a little pop quiz for you. About what? ME, ME, ME. What do I have a hard time keeping shut? Name one team I played for. And what is my nickname? And now I've got one for you...do you know your kid's principal's nickname?" Each of the public service announcements (PSAs) in this series ends with the same message... "Know what really matters. Know about your kid's school and know about your kid. Find out 100 ways to know more, do more." They each raise the provocative question of whether parents may be more familiar with pop culture and celebrities than with what is occurring in their children's every day life.

In the United States, there are currently 50 million children enrolled in public school. However, only one in four parents are actively involved in their schools, and for working parents whose schedules often present additional challenges, that drops to one in nine. This campaign creates a national call to parents to find out simple ways that they can become actively involved in their children's school (the "100 ways to know more, do more" are available at <http://www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/adccouncil/brochure.asp>). Children of involved parents generally have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, more motivation and better self-esteem. These PSAs communicate that when parents know more about their child's school, they know more about their child.

OK...here is another pop quiz. What is Mantua Elementary School's philosophy on the role of homework in your child's education? Don't know? Come to the February 4th PTA meeting. In keeping with the PTA's goal of making the PTA meetings not only an opportunity to conduct our business, but also an opportunity to educate and inform parents about school and child issues, Mrs. Jan-Marie Fernandez will discuss Mantua's basic philosophy on the role homework should play in your child's education, how much homework is appropriate, effective ways parents can support their children's homework efforts, and how faculty handle situations where children do not turn in homework.

In the meantime, check out these sites for effective ways parents can support their children's homework efforts (or perform a search on "ways to help children with homework" and you will find scores of helpful sites):

- <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/homework.html> (source: Department of Education)
- <http://www.nea.org/parents/homework.html> (joint project between NEA and National PTA)
- <http://www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,1-9348,00.html> (tips for helping children (especially with learning disabilities) get organized)

PTA Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 4
7:00 pm in the library



Principal's Coffee

For those of you that made a New Year's

Resolution to attend a Principal's Coffee, now is your chance. Our first Principal's Coffee of 2004 will be on Thursday, January 22nd starting at 9:30 am. Come, meet new friends and our Principal, Jan-Marie Fernandez. The topic for this month is "Developing a Life Long Reader". We are hoping to have a reading specialist join Jan-Marie. The discussion will focus on how kids learn to read and how to keep them interested in reading, as they get older.

And mark your calendar for the coffees scheduled through the end of this school year. On Wednesday, March 24th, the topic will be SOL testing. And the last coffee for the school year will be on Thursday, May 13th. The location for all of the principal's coffee is the home of Barb Suidikas at 3819 Acosta Road. For more information, directions, or to suggest a topic, contact Barb at 703-385-0358 or Suidibarb@aol.com.

Jan-Marie Fernandez, Cheryl Thompson, and Tina Tingler

Notes From the Mantua Principals' Office

Many of your children may have received video or computer games over the holidays. While they do have their advantages, electronic games can lure children away from activities such as outdoor play, reading, arts and crafts, and socializing with their family and friends. This is especially true during the cold and stormy days of winter.

Some advantages of electronic games are that they help children feel comfortable with technology; give them a chance to compete against themselves, rather than another child; and can help children learn to pay close attention, follow directions and solve problems. However, they should never replace the opportunity for children to be involved in active play. Make sure that your children spend at least as much time engaged in physical activities, such as sports or active outdoor games, as they do sitting in front of a screen.

Here are some tips noted in *Report to Parents* published by the National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP):

- **Provide an education:** If your children must play electronic games, buy ones that teach as well as entertain.
- **Check the ratings:** Before you let your children buy, rent, or play a game, look on the front of the box for its rating. Games rated "E" (everyone) are usually the best for school-age children, "T" (teen) games include questionable language, scenes and themes and are intended for those 13 and over.
- **Read the content descriptors:** In addition to the rating, every video and computer game contains a black and white content descriptor box on the back of the game's box. Those descriptors give more details about the product in the terms of violence, sexual themes and language. For more information on ratings and content descriptors, visit the Entertainment Software Ratings Board's (ESRB) Web site at www.ersb.org.
- **Set limits:** The desire to play "just one more" game can be overwhelming and can entice children (and adults) into spending too much time in front of the screen. Set firm limits on when and how long your child can play video or computer games.
- **Keep an eye on grades:** Too many children's grades slip because they're spending too much time with the latest game. Use game time as a privilege, not a daily activity, and insist that schoolwork always come first.
- **Keep violence out of your home:** There's a strong link between watching/playing violent programs and acting aggressively. Keep violent games off limits both at home and at friends' houses.
- **Avoid online games:** In the online environment, you never really know who's on the other end. If you allow your children to play online games, make sure their screen names don't reveal their age, grade, or other personal info.
- **Play together:** Playing computer and video games together is a way to connect with your child while monitoring what he or she is playing. Just remember to spend time together away from the electronic games and television, too.

Counselor's Corner

This month, as we regroup for the New Year, the Counselors will be doing guidance lessons on a variety of topics. The K-2 students will be learning about Problem-Solving, and Impulse Control; the 3rd graders will review Listening and Paying Attention skills; the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders will be learning about Goal Setting for self-improvement, and how to actually achieve their goals.

January is the month that the Safe and Drug Free Youth office helps to sponsor the Bookmark Contest. This is a voluntary activity that students can participate in by designing a poster on the theme: "Working Together, Safe and Drug Free." Poster board cut to specific measurements is required (provided at school) and there are also other specific rules to be followed in order for their "bookmark" to be submitted to the County. Our school will submit one poster to represent the K-3 grades, and one to represent the 4-6 grades. Last year we were very excited, when one of our third graders was selected for one of the top awards in the County. Posters must be turned in at Mantua on January 28.

We would like to remind you that we are continuing to recognize students and families who are involved in Community Service. This year our front hallway bulletin board (outside of the cafeteria) is devoted to displaying the names and pictures of students' and families' who are doing service for the community. Please pick up a form located on the bulletin board, or call Ms. Jones so that we can recognize your child or your family.

Gifted and Talented Programs

The instructional programs for gifted and talented (GT) students provide differentiated instruction to meet student educational needs. A continuum of gifted services is offered in grades K-8. Learning experiences are designed to develop higher-level thinking through enrichment, acceleration, and extensions of the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Program of Studies. The Gifted Behaviors Rating Scale (GBRS), ability and achievement test data, student progress reports, and other academic information are used to determine appropriate GT services.

GT school-based services for elementary grades are designed to strengthen direct services for gifted learners and to enhance the quality of instruction offered to all students. The gifted and talented specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to design differentiated lessons that provide more challenging content, assignments, resources, and/or instructional grouping. The local school GT committee determines student eligibility for school-based GT services.

The full-time GT center program offers eligible students a challenging academic program designed to meet the needs of highly gifted students. Curriculum differentiation in the depth, breadth, and pace of instruction is matched to students' needs in each content area. Students work with academic peers in core subject areas. They also participate with the entire student body in activities such as student government, physical education, band and strings, and other electives. Approximately 68 percent of third through eighth grade students in FCPS attend the GT center program. Parents/guardians may refer students for GT center placement by completing and submitting a Gifted and Talented GT Center Referral Form to the local school principal by March 12, 2004. The countywide central selection committee reviews candidates for GT center placement and makes eligibility decisions.

For additional information, contact the local FCPS elementary or middle school, the GT Program Office located at Lacey Center (703) 846-8670, or the GT website: <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/gt/index.htm>

Workshops for Parents

CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) offers monthly workshops on the third Thursday of each month at Fairfax High School at 7:00 pm. On February 19 the topic is A Closer Look at the "A" in ADD: A Mel Levine Perspective and on March 18 the topic is Getting the Educational Services Your Child Needs.

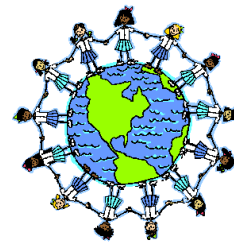
The following workshops are offered by the Lab School in Washington, D.C. at 8:00 pm.

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| January 28 | Surviving Adolescence-Parenting the LD Teenager |
| February 18 | The Hidden Dimensions of Learning Disabilities –
Disorganization, Time & Space |
| March 3 | The Overlap of Executive Difficulties and LD |
| March 17 | The ADHD Child in a Complex Multimedia World |

For more information call 202-944-3083.



Camp out in a museum, dance, laugh, act in a play, discover new cultures and make new friends. Sound like fun? In Girl Scouts, girls learn and play together through our informal educational framework that includes participation from caring adults. One of those adults could be YOU! No Experience needed - Just Enthusiasm. Volunteer opportunities available today in Mantua. We will train! Call Barb Hinton 703-385-0682 or email chevalmom@hotmail.com



Help Wanted

Love the outdoors? Love kids? Then this job is for you. No experience necessary, we will train. Start the New Year as a "Playground Manger" at the best elementary school in Fairfax County, Mantua Elementary. The kids are fabulous, but in need of someone caring to watch over them during their recess. Requires only 45 minutes of your time — 11:15 am to 12:00. If interested, contact Cheryl E. Thompson at 703-645-6300 or Margarita Brown at 703-359-7123.



**Mantua Strings
Winter Concert
Tuesday
February 3
Woodson High
School
Auditorium
7:00 pm**

KIDS CARE CLUB NEWS



The first Kids Care Club delivery of holiday goodies was to Melissa (very back) and her mom (background near house).



Making dreams come true. The Kids Care Club with Mohammad (red sweater, on knees with a big smile), and his two little sisters, who are sitting near mom with Elmo. Mohammad's older sister is standing next to Jennifer Cooper and Randi Kirkland. Mohammad got a new bike for Christmas.

Holiday Giving

Making Dreams Come True

On December 17, 2003, the Kids Care Club made two families overwhelmingly happy and their holidays complete. It was a simple idea of giving. Through all the generous donations from our Mantua families, the Kids Care Club delivered gifts and food to two special families. Melissa and her mom were so surprised at the items we brought. Seeing her a few days later, one of our parents said Melissa's mom thought it had been a dream—a dream come true. Melissa looked radiant in her new winter jacket. The next delivery to a family of 10 had the same effect. The mother of 8 children wanted nothing more than to have a special Christmas for her children. The Kids Care Club made her dream come true too—new bikes for her 3 and 5 year olds, clothes for her toddler and warm winter jackets for her older children and new shoes for all. They were all very, very grateful. The Kids Care Club really does care and even can make dreams come true! And you can help too. Join us at our next meeting on Thursday, January 22, from 3:30 — 4:30 in the cafeteria.

Coming Up

Share to Care

A Talent Show

February 7 at 6:30 pm

Dedicated to

Cameron McClain