



in California

Volume 63, Number 7

Official Newsletter of the California State PTA

Spring 2001



From the President...

Transition—Letting Go Gracefully

This is the time of year when all PTA officers and board members at every level—unit, council, district and state—must give serious thought to transitions. Transition from one administration to the next; transition from one position to another; transition, perhaps, from a very active PTA role to being a less visible supportive member. How do we—you and I—accomplish this most difficult of tasks: helping to ensure the success of those who follow us in office and the continuing well being of our organization without interfering with or undermining a new administration?

It certainly isn't an easy job. In many respects, it is both the toughest and most important responsibility of any office. It is especially difficult when one feels that after this time in office one finally understands the job and all its ramifications, and how it should be done—and when one wonders if the successor will understand how to build on all one's good work or even want to.

How to proceed? I offer these suggestions, which I plan to follow—I hope, successfully.

- Invite your successor to a meeting, or several if necessary, to review the files you will turn over. This is your opportunity to explain the information contained in the files, answer any questions your successor may have, and thoroughly discuss the issues you've dealt with during your term.
- Review with your successor the contents of the procedure book you will turn over. A good page to prepare for the front of the book is a list of important things you've learned that aren't in writing anywhere else.
- Review the PTA Calendar—the events, timelines and deadlines encountered in your job.
- If you have organizational information in your personal computer, you will want to download it onto floppy disks for your successor. If the computer you use belongs to the organization, you will want to explain the information it contains. Review computer information with your successor in the same manner you reviewed the files.
- Offer to be available if questions arise.
- Smile, wish your successor the best, retire gracefully, and let go, let go, let go.

You have no choice: a newly elected administration is taking office. The best thing any successor can say about you is, "My predecessor really prepared me for this job. After our meetings I felt confident I could go forward and do the job well." **The finest reputation a PTA leader can have is that one acted as a mentor, teaching well those who followed in office.**

And what about us? What did we learn while in office? Because PTA leadership is the best training ground for anyone interested in organizational or community leadership or public life, we are prepared to build on that experience, and take on new responsibilities. And, as individuals, surely we experienced personal growth, increase in knowledge and enhancement of our "people skills." All of this will serve us well; enabling us to take advantage of whatever opportunities may arise.



Lavonne McBroom

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Life After High School: Alternatives that Don't Require a Four-Year Degree

“What are you doing after high school?” For most teenagers, this question elicits only one possible reply: going to college. But is this the only or best choice? It all depends on the teenager.

Writing in the “Chronicle of Higher Education,” Kenneth Gray and Edmund Herr (May 10, 1996) maintain that it’s essential to take thorough assessment of your teenager’s interests and abilities before he or she jumps into a four-year program. (To learn more about evaluating your teen’s readiness for college, read the first installment in this series—Life After High School: How is a parent to know if a teen is ready for college?”—in the November 2000 issue of “Our Children” magazine.

There are alternatives to beginning a four-year education immediately after high school: (1) postponing college for a year, or more, and (2) pursuing technical and career training through a community college, technical institute, or trade school.

Taking a year off

The most common reason why some teenagers consider taking a year off after high school, say high school counselors, is education fatigue—the student is simply tired of school. There are instances, explains Joan Jacobson, a counselor at Shawnee Mission South Public High School (Shawnee Mission, KS), when the teenager wants a year off, but the parents fear that their son or daughter may never go on to college. In such cases, the parents and their son or daughter may want to draw up a plan. “If the student can present, in addition to the reasons why he or she doesn’t feel ready to continue, a sequence of actions that they will pursue in the interim, I find parents are much less likely to balk at the suggestion.”

Parents shouldn’t fear the prospect of their child losing interest in higher education during the year off, said Bob Gilpin, president of Time Out Associates, a business that matches young people with opportunities during their time off. Based on his experience, the opposite generally occurs: After a year off, students nearly always return to school with a higher level of enthusiasm and a greater sense of purpose.

High school and college counselors interviewed by National PTA agreed that if a student is taking a year off, he or she should go through the application process in the senior year, be accepted to college, and then, if possible, defer enrollment. Fortunately, all public colleges and universities and a growing number of private schools are now allowing students to defer for a year. Many schools, however, require that the student put down a deposit.

Choosing how to spend the year

What a high school graduate does during his or her time off before entering college will largely depend on finances. Options include (1) internships or employment that will enable him or her to learn more about a particular career, (2) volunteer opportunities with private organizations, churches, or governmental agencies, (3) a combination of these approaches to explore a career interest for part of the year, and then travel or volunteer for the rest of the year.

A fourth option, if one is willing to take at least two years off, is enlisting in the military, which may allow a young person to explore career interests and reduce future college costs through various tuition assistance programs. (For more information about

tuition assistance, technical training in the military, and military careers, visit <<www.militarycareers.com/>>

Marybeth Kravets, president of the National Association of College Admissions Counseling and a college counselor at Deerfield (IL) Public High School, explains that college admissions officers will be taking a close look at what teenagers did with the time off. “The question is, ‘What are they doing with their time to make it constructive?’”

Gilpin, of Time Out Associates, said a successful year off will affect young people in different ways. Some of the changes he has seen include increased self-confidence, greater desire to learn, better attitudes, and a better understanding of goals.

However, if your teenager is turned off altogether by the idea of a four-year education, then he or she should consider attending one of the 9,400 post-secondary technical institutions located throughout this country.

The best evidence that more students should consider career and technical training is the high rate of students dropping out of four-year colleges, said Bret Lovejoy, executive director of the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE). Consider this: The U.S. Department of Education estimates that half of all entrants in four-year colleges fail to graduate. Furthermore, when college dropouts enter the job market, their earnings, on average, are usually less than students who completed a degree at a two-year college.

For the full text of this article and links to other helpful sites, go to <<www.pta.org/cfplus/oc/ocjan01/featur/f3.htm>>.

The “Grand” In Grandparenting

“Grandparent.” To a child that word means so much more than simply the parent of his or her parent. In fact, to a child the emphasis is on “grand,” meaning magnificent and wonderful. After all, many children will readily agree that grandma and grandpa always are happy to see them, let them stay up late and sleep in, cook their favorite foods, take them to the mall to pick out a beloved toy, and listen attentively as they recount their dreams and disappointments. Grandma and grandpa just revel in their grandchild’s presence, and vice-versa.

“Grandparents and grandchildren are kind of hard-wired to connect in ways very different from the ways that parents and children connect,” said Arthur Kornhaber, M.D. “They have this adoration and unconditional love and joy in one another’s existence.”

In being two generations removed, grandparents are no longer burdened by the inherent judgment that parents face, namely that a child’s behavior reflects on their effectiveness as parents. In essence grandparents are freer just to enjoy their grandchildren. Plus, although today’s grandparents may have busy lives, they likely aren’t as overscheduled as their sons and daughters.

The above was excerpted from a story in the January/February 2001 issue of “Our Children” magazine. To read the article in its entirety—as well as the side stories, “When Grandchildren Live at Grandma and Grandpa’s House” and “Grandparent Resources” visit <<<http://www.pta.org>>>.

Parenting Education Commission



California State PTA Reflections Program Finalists Announced

Over 64,200 students from throughout California participated in this year's National PTA Reflections Program. The Reflections Program provides the opportunity for students to create and be recognized for original works of art (literature, musical composition, photography and visual arts) that support an annual theme. The 2000-2001 Reflections Program theme was *It would be really strange if...*

The California State PTA is pleased to recognize the 2000-2001 State Finalists with an Award of Excellence. Their artwork has been forwarded to the National PTA for consideration.

Musical Composition

6th District, **Benjamin Lai**, Faria Alternative PTA,

It would be really strange if

Everything Was Plain Old-Fashion

21st District, **Emilee Hatfield**, Royal Oaks Elementary PTA,

It would be really strange if there were no white keys...

4th District, **Ryan Fuh**, Deerfield Elementary PTA,

It would be really strange if the aliens came

to visit and invade the earth

2nd District, **Frances Delaney**, Lowell High School PTSA,

Wandering Lost

Literature

16th District, **Thomas Christie**, Loma Verde Elementary PTA,

It would be really strange if dogs could talk

13th District, **Ryan Penne**, Marigold Elementary PTA,

It Would Be Really Strange If

5th District, **Nathan Mustafa**, Pepper Tree Elementary PTA,

It Would Be Really Strange If People Couldn't Lie

16th District, **Rebecca Sleath**, Novato High PTSA,

Typical

Visual Arts

12th District, **Samantha Noah**, Vista Elementary PTA

If Animals Lived Like People

27th District, **Jamie Rose Shoemaker**, Yokayo Elementary PTA

Frogs Could Do Ballet

31st District, **Misha Kokuashvili**, W. Reed Jr. High PTA

It would be really strange if Cancer Could Paint

33rd District, **Andrew Huang**,

Palos Verdes Peninsula High PTSA

If We Could Design Ourselves

Photography

27th District, **Marcus Ramirez**, Yokayo Elementary PTA

How Mushrooms Grow

9th District, **Emma Lazzara**, Murray Manor Elementary PTA

It would be really strange if fish could fly

32nd District, **Ricky Doyle**, M.H. Stanley Intermediate PTA

It would be really strange if you could freeze time

9th District, **Shaylena Stewart**, Ramona High School PTA

Painting the Big Sky – Heaven

Congratulations to ALL Reflections Program participants!

Jan Cossette, Reflections Program Chairman

Honoring Volunteers

Unit and council Annual Historian Reports should now be well underway, by gathering and totaling hours, completing the questions on the reverse side, and sending them “up” to meet the next PTA level’s deadline.

Once the hours are totaled, what are you going to do with those “numbers?” Now is the time to create a large “check” to present to your board of education.

The volunteer hours may be multiplied by a dollar number such as \$8.00 to represent the amount of funding represented by your volunteers’ time. A model blank check was included in the July 2000 *Communicator*.

As springtime is frequently the time to honor and recognize volunteers, you might consider not only bestowing PTA awards on special people, but recognizing those members who have done as much as their schedule permits, even if it was just a few hours.

Let your volunteers know that they are not just numbers or hours tallied. Hold a special event to thank them ALL—Make it a family night or a Saturday all-school awards picnic.

The California State PTA has focused this year on promoting Arts in Education. The students might like to express through art projects their thanks to their family and community volunteers. Display the artwork throughout the school or community, or at a special “Reception of Thanks.”

Let all of your PTA volunteers know they are not just “numbers”—they are very special people to ALL children.

You're Making PTA History! But Where Is It?

Why should you try to fill the Historian spot on your PTA board? Although it may not be considered a major position, it can be a crucial one for your PTA’s past.

Do you know where your PTA records are? Few groups have an “office”—some just have a file cabinet or “boxes under the bed.” Do you have a drawer of musty record books in the school, or boxes of dusty old albums on a shelf in the custodian’s closet?

The Historian’s duties are outlined in the worksheet for PTA officers. Beyond these described duties are the extras—identifying and preserving the past as well as the future. The “History Book Kit” available through the *California State PTA Catalog of Materials* is a good way to re-do your PTA’s historical material which was not previously properly catalogued or stored.

History books are of no use if they are kept in boxes. Display them at school and community events. Create a mobile display board with old pictures, documents, and awards from your PTA’s past. Then put it out at Founders Day and other functions so others may appreciate your PTA’s history.

Gale Devetter, Historian

Open Board Meetings The Brown Act and PTA

The Brown Act requires public bodies such as school boards, city councils or boards of supervisors to hold open board meetings for the majority of the business that must be transacted. PTA, however, is a private nonprofit, membership organization and, as such, the Brown Act does not place the same restrictions on a PTA executive board or committee.

The PTA board meeting is the business of the board members, the elected and appointed officers, the teacher representative, the chairmen of committees and the site administrator only. Guests may be invited to a PTA board meeting to bring special information, and may be granted a “courtesy seat” with the permission of the chair, but they do not participate as voting members of the group. Generally, guests are expected to leave after providing information and prior to any vote on that subject.

Since the minutes of a meeting are available only to those authorized to attend that meeting and are not available for general distribution, a summary of the business conducted by the board may be presented by the secretary at the association meeting or included in the newsletter.

If a PTA member is showing interest in the activities of the executive board and in attending those meetings, the board should consider appointing that person to serve as a committee chair, thus enabling him or her to be actively involved.

Brenda Davis, Parliamentarian



Showing Your Child the Wonder of Music

Evidence for the educational value of the arts has grown steadily over the years. High school students, for example, who study at least one of the arts— theater, the visual arts, dance, or music—score about 40 points higher on the verbal and math sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than other students.

There are several things parents can do to introduce the arts, specifically music, to children. Just as “reading readiness” provides a base for building reading skills, “arts readiness” can prepare your youngster for a lifetime of enjoyment and fulfillment from the arts.

To learn more about introducing your children to music and how to determine if your child’s school has a good music education program, read “Showing Your Child the Wonder of Music” in the PTA’s Arts Education Library at

<<www.pta.org/programs/arts/activities/wonder.htm>>



“every child. one voice.”

The message of PTA is “every child. one voice.” It’s been our approach to serving children for more than 104 years—speaking as a unified voice for the education, safety, and well-being of every child at home and school; in urban, rural, and suburban communities;

and in our nation’s capital.

What’s new? Beginning in July, this message will be trumpeted across the country as National PTA launches a media campaign to remind the nation that we are 6.5 million members strong, working on behalf of all children. Whether turning the radio knob during morning rush hour, watching a favorite TV show with the family at night, or flipping the pages of a magazine, National PTA’s message—every child. one voice.—will ring out strongly.

The campaign will appear across the United States, and in Department of Defense schools abroad, from mid-July to October to raise public awareness that National PTA is the expert on parent/family involvement. National PTA does more than just care about current issues and challenges that face families, schools, and communities; we take action to help legislators and public officials hear our message.

Among our efforts, we strive to ensure:

- every child has a parent/family member who is actively engaged in his or her life and education
- every child has a safe place to be before and after school
- every child has the opportunity to learn in a classroom that isn’t overcrowded
- every child has access to an equitable and excellent public school education
- every child has equal access to computer literacy at school
- every child can rest assured that his or her school is safe and drug-free

I know when you hear the National PTA message on the television or radio, or spot an ad in your magazine, that you’ll smile knowing you’ve made the right choice. You’ve chosen to be a part of a grass roots organization that focuses on all children, and through your membership and hard work, you are making a difference in children’s lives in your school, in your community, in your state, and all across the nation.

Help spread the word. Share your story proudly. Let others know what a difference PTA membership makes, and invite them to join with you in speaking on behalf of every child with one voice.

Ginny Markell, National PTA President

Does Your Child Click With A Clique?

A need to belong emerges with a vengeance during early adolescence. This is when a child discovers that a whole world exists beyond the family. An overwhelming desire to fit in takes center stage. A child's thoughts and reactions revolve around his or her interests with friends and peers.

Consider these situations:

- A Chicago mom confesses that her beautiful 6th-grade daughter cries in her room nightly, afraid she won't look right tomorrow and, as a consequence, she will lose her standing in her group at school.
- A teacher in Lake Placid, New York, reports that her smart 13-year-old son

announced, "Mom, I'm going to fail that science test tomorrow. I just have to, or I won't have any friends."

According to Colorado sociologists and researchers Patricia and Peter Adler, four basic groups define the middle school social culture:

- The popular clique or cool group, whose members have the most friends, socialize earlier than others inside and outside of school, and appear to be having all the fun.
- The fringe group or popular clique wannabes who mimic the rules set by the top caste.
- The friendship circles—small groups of several friends who opt for a look and

culture of their own. Some of these circles are defined by a similar hobby or interest such as the skateboarders or computer geeks, others by a look and style such as the Abercrombie's (named for the clothing store) or Goths (who dress in black).

- The loners who appear to have no friends and may envy all of those kids who seem to belong so naturally.

The above was excerpted from "Does Your Child Click with a Clique?" which appeared in the March 2001 issue of "Our Children." To read the article in its entirety, visit

www.pta.org/cfplus/oc/ocmar01/featur/f2.htm



Keep Your Kids Safe From Lead Poisoning

Lead is a metal found in many products, especially in paint on houses built before 1960. Although the use of lead was banned from residential paint in 1978, there may be some lead in paint on homes built between 1960 and 1978. Homes built before 1960 probably have a great deal of leaded paint. Lead is also found in soil from years of leaded gasoline use and in antique or imported items used at home.

Lead poisoning can cause serious damage to the brain and nervous system, particularly in children, that can lead to learning problems in school. The damages caused by lead poisoning may be irreversible and permanent. Prevention is the key to avoiding lead poisoning. The following are some tips that will help to prevent your children from getting lead poisoning.

- **Items that go in the mouth.** Lead dust on the floor or ground can get onto toys, bottles and hands. When little children put these things in their mouths, they ingest the lead dust. Wash children's hands before eating and after play. Wash items that go in the mouth often. Try to keep children from sucking their thumbs. Use clean pacifiers if necessary.
- **Foods with iron calcium and vitamin C.** These nutrients, along with low-fat foods, help protect a child from lead poisoning.
- **Test your child's blood for lead.** Children can have lead poisoning and not look or act sick. Blood tests are the only way of knowing. Medi-Cal and low-income children can get free medical checkups, including a blood lead test.
- **Pottery and dishes.** Don't use imported or decorated dishes or handmade pottery for cooking, storing or serving food. Use plastic and glass cups and dishes. Cast iron and metal pots are safe to use. Kitchenware made in the U.S.A. should be safe to use. Do not use leaded glass or antique dishes for cooking or storing foods or drinks.
- **Pre 1960 housing with paint that is peeling, chipping or turning to dust.** Cover peeling paint with duct tape or contact paper. Keep your child's bed and play areas away from

old paint. Use water for cleaning, rather than a dry broom. Mop and wet-wipe floors and window sills often. Add household cleaner to water for better results.

- **Remodeling.** Get advice before scraping, sanding, etc., in any house built before 1978. Remodeling creates a lot of lead dust that can poison the entire family. You can buy a lead test kit in paint and building supply stores. Call the State Lead-Related Construction Hotline at 1-800-597 LEAD.
- **Imported items for children.** Products made in the U.S.A. should be lead-safe. Be careful of items from other countries that can have hidden lead, such as color crayons, decals on toys, ceramic figurines, or some foreign-made vinyl products.
- **Candy.** Lead can be in the wrappers and candy from other countries. Don't let children hold or chew these wrappers, or eat too many of these candies. Candy of this type is commonly sold by ice cream vendors and discount stores. Be aware of how much of this candy your children may be eating.
- **Home remedies.** Azarcon, greta and other powders may contain lead. Give your children only doctor-approved medicines.
- **Soil.** Do not let children play in dirt near an old house with peeling paint, a busy street, highway, factory or auto shop. Use a sandbox. Cover soil around your house with plants, rocks or pavement.
- **Tap water.** Run water for several minutes before first use each day. Use only cold water for baby formula.

For more information about childhood lead poisoning prevention, call the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-5323.

Adapted from an article by the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Community Epidemiology, P.O. Box 85222, P511C-A—San Diego, CA92186-5222—(619) 515-6694.

*Roxanne Hoffman, Health Commission
Pat Klotz Parenting Education Commission*



Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) in Schools:

What You Need to Know to Reduce Your Child's Exposure to Air Pollution in the Classroom

Shelly Rosenblum, Indoor Environments Team, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, San Francisco 415-744-1047

Fact: Most people are exposed to more pollution indoors than outside.

Fact: Because schools are densely crowded and underfunded for repairs, and because special activities in schools generate more pollution than in offices or homes, indoor air pollution in schools can be particularly severe.

Fact: Indoor air pollution in schools can exacerbate asthma and other health problems.

Fact: You can do something about it—right now!

What you should know:

EPA and its Science Advisory Board ranks indoor air pollution among the top five environmental health risks to the public. In schools, long-term under funding has resulted in leaky roofs that result in mold growth, poorly operating ventilation systems that do not deliver adequate amounts of fresh air and windows that have long since been rendered inoperative. Because school administrators, teachers and school staff have never been educated about the importance of good indoor air quality or the way they each contribute to good and bad indoor air quality, we see many activities in schools that contribute contaminants to the air your children have to breathe day in and day out. Poor indoor air quality can affect their health and make it difficult for them to function at their best. It also makes it difficult for their teachers to do their job to the best of their ability. Result? Short and potentially long-term health problems and a diminished potential to excel academically.

What's the first thing you should you do?

To begin with, learn about indoor air quality. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Web site <<www.epa.gov/iaq>> is a great source of accurate information that provides links to other agencies and research centers. Click on the "schools" button. Then look at the EPA's Indoor Air Quality.

Tools for Schools Action Kit

The kit is a simple to use common sense guide to no cost and low cost solutions for indoor air problems. Its voluntary educational approach will help school staff avoid problems before they occur and direct them through an indoor air investigation when problems do occur. Checklists in the kit, which are tailored to all the different members of the school community, i.e., teachers, custodians, facilities staff, office workers, etc., will help everyone to see how their typ-

ical activities affect indoor air quality. They will even help you understand how your activities affect indoor air quality in your own home. Download the kit or call the EPA IAQ Clearinghouse at 800-438-4318 for a free (to schools only!) kit.

What comes next? How can you help?

Administrators and school staff need to know that providing the best possible indoor air quality is important to the health of the school occupants and their ability to teach and learn so it must be placed high on the district's and the school's priority list. If you are a parent, it's your children's health and education we're talking about, so talk to the school principal, teachers or other parents about it. Volunteer to help! If you are a teacher, your health and your ability to accomplish your mission is on the line, so consider becoming an "Indoor Air Coordinator" to help educate the other school staff about indoor air quality. Ask your colleagues and other staff to work with the checklists to see how their daily activities affect the air in the school. Examine the checklists to see if one part of the school has more problems than others. Using the checklists, do a walk-through of the school. Prioritize your findings and discuss them with the school community. Understand that these findings have health implications so they must be considered relative to other important district priorities. Develop an IAQ Management Plan to reevaluate the school every year. Involve the students.

Ask the EPA for a list of curricula that have been developed to teach children about indoor air quality. Kids in one school in Chico became IAQ detectives and helped a teacher who was suffering due to indoor air contaminants in her classroom. See their Web site, "Crabby Kathy" at <<www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/kathy/home.htm>> It's a great way to teach kids about many different areas of science and the environment while at the same time improving conditions within the school!

Where can we get more information?

In addition to the EPA Web site and Clearinghouse, the American Lung Association (ALA) has adopted the EPA Tools for Schools Program as a national priority, Web site <<www.lungusa.org>> or contact your local chapter (800) LUNGUSA Program.

Call the EPA Indoor Environments Team in San Francisco at 415-744-1047 for more information.

However, you shouldn't need much help. The Tools for Schools Kit is easy to use and is made to be modified to fit your time and resources. Begin now. Even small steps can make big improvements in the air in your kids' schools.

Typical IAQ Issues at Schools

Many indoor air problems in schools can be corrected by simple education. All the items below can be addressed quickly with a little education. These are things you need to know about and insist on! Your children's health and education depend on it.

Have outside air intake vents on the ventilation system been closed permanently to save energy? These should be opened in accordance with state ventilation codes and industry standards.

Do maintenance staff ignore roof leaks because they don't have enough money to replace the whole roof? After rains, leaky ceilings should be immediately opened to allow for drying in order to avoid mold growth. Wet insulation should be carefully removed and discarded.

Is renovation occurring without isolating occupied space from dust and fumes? The district should put the burden on the contractors to ensure proper isolation.

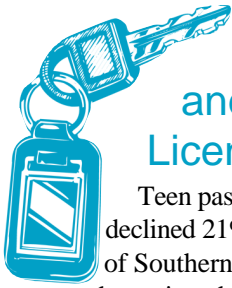
We all need to learn about sources of indoor air contaminants and allergens. Some are obvious, but others are not. Animals, especially mammals, are sources of dander and other allergens. If the decision is made to keep pets in the classroom, can they be located away from the most sensitive students? Old donated couches may harbor allergens from the previous owner's pets and may also contain mold and dust mites. Be selective about accepting such donations.

Common activities can affect indoor air quality. For example, are teaching supplies blocking the air flow from ventilation units? Are ventilation units turned off because of noise? If so, perhaps they could be turned back on when the teacher is no longer lecturing.

Is it possible to arrange the classroom in such a way that the custodians can clean more quickly and efficiently? Do they have equipment such as high efficiency vacuums that remove dust rather than just put it back into the air? Consider purchasing these.

The items above and others are all simple things that can affect indoor air quality and can be addressed for little or no cost. What can you find in your classroom?

Health Commission



California Teen Passenger Deaths and Injuries Drop as Graduated Driver License Law Marks Second Anniversary

Teen passenger deaths and injuries when 16-year-olds are behind the wheel declined 21% statewide from 1998 to 2000, according to the Automobile Club of Southern California. A new analysis of California teen crash data reveals dramatic reduction in deaths and injuries among teens as the state marks the second anniversary of its Graduated Driver License (GDL) system.

It now seems clear that this type of restriction can save lives and reduce injuries. The 21 percent decline in deaths and injuries over the first 11 months of 1999 is substantial, especially when compared to passenger deaths and injuries for 18- to 19-year-old drivers who weren't affected by GDL. In that group, teen passenger deaths and injuries increased 5 percent.

Reductions in 1999 are noteworthy. In the years before GDL, teen passenger deaths and injuries for 16-year-old and 18- to 19-year-old drivers changed at very similar rates. Each year (on average), from 1994-1998, the number of teen passengers killed and injured decreased four percent for 16-year-old drivers and three percent for 18- to 19-year-old drivers.

The GDL law, which took effect July 1998, increased requirements for California teenagers under age 18 to obtain a full, unrestricted license. Teens are now prohibited from transporting passengers under age 20 during their first six months of licensure.

The number of fatal and injury crashes where 16-year-old drivers were at fault declined 20 percent from 1998-1999. By comparison, at fault crashes of 18-year-olds increased six percent. Prior to the GDL law, average annual changes in at-fault crashes for 16- and 18-year-old drivers were nearly identical—less than one percent per year.

It's not clear exactly how GDL works to reduce crashes. California's reduction in crashes could be a result of decreased teen driving and licensing or due to increased driving practice and better teen driving. More research is needed to determine why GDL had the effect it did on teen crashes and teen passenger deaths and injuries. The fact is, more teens are alive as a result of the enactment of GDL!

Adapted from CASE Newsletter, January 2001, California Association for Safety Education and the Automobile Club of Southern California.

CTA/CASE Coordinate Efforts

SB 204 (Lowenthal) Teen Driver Training Legislation

The California Association for Safety Education (CASE) and the California Teachers Association (CTA) are working with Assemblymember Lowenthal and Senator Karnette to sponsor legislation to restore funding for driver training classes. AB 204 (Lowenthal) would restore funding for teen driver training (\$140 per regular student trained and \$390 per handicapped student trained), using the Driver Training Penalty Assessment Fund (DTPAF) as the revenue source. Funding would also be used to restore a Traffic Safety Education Unit within the California Department of Education (CDE). The proposed legislation would alter the budget allocation process so that revenues from the DTPAF would be automatically transferred to CDE each year, rather than be dependent on state budget action, as is now the practice. In addition, an added requirement that school districts adopt minimum attendance requirements for students to enroll in driver training classes is recommended, therefore encouraging the students to stay in school.

PTA safety chairs and community safety conscious organizations (service clubs, local emergency facilities, MADD chapters, etc.) are encouraged to help build grass roots support for this legislation. A united front on the issue of traffic safety will be necessary to assure a proven program to improve traffic safety, especially among teens.

Adapted from CASE Newsletter, January 2001, California Association for Safety Education.

Community Concerns Commission

Happy Campers: Plan Ahead to Make Your Child's Summer Camp Experience Rewarding

While shoveling driveways or cooking the nightly dinner, many parents may be too preoccupied to think ahead to summer activities for their children. Even families who live in warmer climates may be too focused on the present to look ahead to the school year ending. This is, however, the perfect time to begin making plans for day and overnight camps.

With more than 8,500 camps in the United States, choosing one may seem overwhelming. Selecting the right program often boils down to knowing your options and asking the right questions. To learn more about a camp, the American Camping Association (ACA) suggests that parents ask camp directors the following questions:

- What is your educational and career background?
- How many campers return the next year?
- What is the refund policy?
- How old are the counselors? What percentage are return counselors from past years? What certification do you look for in staff?
- What is the ratio of counselors to campers?
- What is the camp's program philosophy?
- What are the safety and medical accommodations at the camp?
- Is it possible to visit the camp before enrolling your child?
- Will the camp director provide references so you can contact other families whose children have attended the camp?
- Is the camp accredited by the ACA?

To read this article in its entirety—visit <<www.pta.org/cfplus/oc/ocmar00/featur/f2.htm>>.





Appreciate Teachers

Teaching is one of the most important jobs. Teachers help to shape our children's lives. People who teach do not do it for the wealth they will accumulate. They do it because they love children. They are life-long learners themselves and enjoy sharing their knowledge with their students.

Too often, parents are quick to phone or write a teacher when they are upset; too often parents neglect to share their joy when they realize their child has learned something special. With so many time restrictions on busy parents and caregivers, it is often difficult to thank teachers for all they do. Teaching is exhausting because teachers give more of themselves than is required in other professions. They give their hearts and souls to our children.

National PTA Teacher Appreciation Week is May 6-12, 2001. PTA units may take this opportunity to show teachers how much they are appreciated. It is not necessary to spend a great deal of money, but it is important to remember them during this special time. Here are a few suggestions:

- Hold a luncheon-PTAparents can each bring a dish!
- Put an apple and an aspirin in each teacher's mailbox.
- Have each child write a special note to the teacher.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, thanking your teachers for all they do.
- Provide a planted flower bulb for each teacher, thanking them for planting the seeds of wisdom.
- Give teachers a small gift to be used in the classrooms.
- Give each teacher a heart-shaped cookie or muffin with a note that tells them they are the "heart of education."

There are, of course, hundreds of ways a unit can show their appreciation for their teachers, and many units have customs that are used each year. Share your ideas with your council. Teacher Appreciation is such an important time of the year. Make the time to show teachers how much you appreciate all they do for all children.

Deme Larson, Parenting Education Commission

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Spring 2001. Official newsletter of the California State PTA, Volume 63, No. 7. Eight issues published annually: Summer, Summer/Fall, Fall, Fall/Winter, Winter, Winter/Spring, Spring, Spring/Summer. 2000-2001. Subscription rate \$5.00. Circulation 6,800. ©2001 California Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students, Inc. All rights reserved. PTA® is a registered service mark of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

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