

May 2011 Advocacy Newsletter

Information gathered by the Education, Environment, Family Engagement, Health and Wellness and Special Education Chairs to assist you in your advocacy efforts.



Education

- **For the Full Board of Regents April report, go to:**
<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2011Meetings/April2011/411monthmat.html#B>.
- **This year's Regents Review 2.0 is available!** This comprehensive TV and web-based test-prep series is designed for high school students studying for the June 2011 Regents exams. The series features one-hour, in depth review programs on 14 different subjects – one program each for the specific NYS curriculum areas tested annually through Regents exams. The shows will begin airing in early may on all nine NYS Public Television stations. Go to <http://www.regentsreviewlive.net/> for more information.
- **Ten Tips for Assessing Project-Based Learning:** This free download is full of hands-on advice and resources from around the Web. From tips on how to “Keep It Real with Authentic Products” to “Use Formative Strategies to Keep Projects on Track,” our new guide is full of strategies to help you assess K-12 classroom projects like a pro: <http://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning>.
- **For Budget-Strapped Districts – AP Courses Offered Online:** For students in districts facing budget cuts, online courses are becoming an increasingly popular option. Courses require students to log on, and teachers are available by email, phone, online discussions or instant messaging. After completing the course, students take the AP exam in school like other students. Read about it at: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703922504576272872529316328.html?mod=W_SJ_WSJ_Careers_CJEducation_2.



Environment

- It's Spring (that's the rumor, anyway!) Regardless, **kids need to spend lots of time outdoors.** Read and watch this and be convinced: <http://yourlife.usatoday.com/parenting-family/story/2011/04/The-great-outdoors-are-just-that-for-kids/46093534/1>.
- As mentioned before....now see a video of Ann Cooper, the **Renegade Lunch Lady!** Be inspired about what's possible:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXvDLPu5vh0&feature=player_embedded.
- Here's a really **cool set of teaching tools** that might be of interest to teachers in your building:
<http://www.envirosapes.com/>.

- Check out this hopeful documentary shown at the Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival, *Fixing the Future*: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/fixing-the-future/fixing-the-future-with-david-brancaccio>.
- More on **localizing the economy**. Yay Saratoga Farmers' Market: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZcbq4JNuto>.
- Do some good for others while growing food in your own garden! **Plant a Row for the Hungry**: <http://www.gardenwriters.org/gwa.php?p=par%2Findex.html>.
- New York Energy Research and Development Authority will provide \$25 million over the next five years to promote the production of **hot water from solar power**. The program provides incentives of up to \$4,000 per site for eligible residential customers and up to \$25,000 per site for eligible commercial and non-profit customers who use electricity to produce hot water: <http://www.nyserda.org/funding/2149pon.asp>.
- For my PTA friends in Western NY, I came across this gem in my travels across the state on my way to Pittsburgh. **Catbird Griddle**: <http://catbirdgriddle.blogspot.com/2011/04/were-building-our-own-food-truck.html>.
- **Creative Idea!** More than 30,000 students were honored for doing their part to reduce, reuse and recycle. The recycled art program features work from more than 1,300 student artists who collaborated on more than 100 pieces of art made with recyclable materials. Several of the pieces lined the hallway at the entrance to the Legislative Office Building. To learn more: <http://www.legislativegazette.com/Articles-c-2011-04-20-76644.113122-Student-recyclers-cited-by-Schimel.html>.



Family Engagement

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- Resource for Parent Involvement related to **helping kids with their homework**: <http://homeworklady.com/>.
 - **Middle grades: A complex, challenging, and confusing time in adolescence.** Also a complex, challenging and confusing age for adults to support and develop! Nonetheless, there is more and more research which points to the critical importance of this stage of childhood. Supporting students as they transition physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially is key to ensuring that they are successful and healthy in high school and beyond. Check out ASCD's research, podcasts, etc.: <http://whatworks.wholechildeducation.org/featured-topics/middle-grades/>.
 - **Ongoing Child Assessment and Family Engagement: New Opportunities to Engage Families in Children's Learning and Development** provides strategies for early childhood programs to effectively share data with families; highlights how to make data understandable, meaningful and actionable; and illustrates how this data can support a child's learning throughout early childhood, from birth to school entry. This paper is the first in a series that will help early childhood care and education programs identify ways that they can share information, in order to strengthen partnerships and work toward common goals. To download, go to: <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/ongoing-child-assessment-and-family-engagement-new-opportunities-to-engage-families-in-children-s-learning-and-development>.



Health and Wellness

- How does the **United States Tennis Association help kids after school**? There are many grants and programs available to help kids get exercise, time for study, and a snack after school. Follow the link below to find some introductory information: http://www.usta.com/About-USTA/TheBigServ/afterschool_adoptaschool/. Another link to understand more about tennis and how tennis “serves” healthy lifestyles: <http://www.neworleanstennis.com/Extra%20Pages/Best%20First%20Sport%204-98%20-%20handout.pdf>.
- The USDA has issued two memos to provide **guidance on the milk and water provisions in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act**. School districts are encouraged to begin implementation of these requirements as soon as possible, but no later than the beginning of the School Year 2011-2012. Advocates can support early implementation by working with school nutrition programs, school wellness councils and other stakeholders to raise awareness, promote education efforts and connect schools with best practice information on the new requirements.
 - **Water Availability during National School Lunch Program Meal Service**
School food authorities must make water available to students at no charge during meal service, but have flexibility to determine how to implement this requirement. For example, schools may offer water pitchers and cups on lunch tables or have accessible water fountains or faucets: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP_28-2011.pdf.
 - **Nutrition Requirements for Fluid Milk**
School food authorities must offer at least two choices of milk that are fat-free or low-fat (1%). While flavored and unflavored milk is allowed until USDA’s updated school meal standards are finalized, schools should consider implementing USDA’s proposed rule to serve only unflavored low-fat (1%) and flavored or unflavored fat-free milks: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP_29-2011-os.pdf.
- **Consumer’s Union Safety Tips:**
 - Organic Food Bar, Inc. of Fullerton, CA is recalling the specific lots of Chocolatey Chocolate Chip RAW Organic Food Bars, because they may contain undeclared peanut proteins. People who have an allergy or severe sensitivity to peanuts run the risk of serious or life-threatening allergic reaction if they consume these products.
 - My Michelle has recalled 90,000 girls’ tops/shirts in sizes small to extra large (7-16) due to high levels of lead. Lead is toxic if ingested and can cause severe health effects. The garments were sold in various styles, including tops with beaded necklaces attached to the collar and tops with metallic beads.
 - For more information on these recalls and for additional recalls and safety information, go to www.clickcheckandprotect.org.



Special Education

- **Being the parent of a special education student can be a challenge.** It seems that rights as well as responsibilities change often. For additional information about IDEA, working with your

school district and to become more knowledgeable visit:

https://www.disability.gov/education/parent_resources/parent_involvement.

- **Please make your opinions known!** There is a survey available for parents to describe their experiences in the special education system. The survey is sponsored by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), Autism Society of America (ASA), Autism National Committee (AutCom) and The Advocacy Institute (AI). It runs through May 2011 and can be accessed at <http://www.ideasurvey.org>.
- New York Stated Education Department has posted information about upcoming **Professional Development workshops**. These include: Developing a Quality Individualized Education Program; Testing Accommodations; and Training of the Parent member of the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) or Committee on Special Education (CSE). The dates and locations of the trainings will be announced at the end of the summer.
- Since we are almost at the end of the annual review season, it is important for parents and schools to develop effective IEPs for students. The Matrix Parent Center has created a **comprehensive IEP Toolkit**. It can be found at <http://www.matrixparents.org/pdf/packetsArticles/IEP%20Tool%20Kit%20March%202011.pdf>.
- **Special education students are often the target of bullying.** Parents need to be vigilant more than ever. For information: <http://www.abilitypath.org/areas-of-development/learning--schools/bullying/articles/walk-a-mile-in-their-shoes.pdf>.
- **Part 200 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education** has been updated to include all amendments through March 2011 and is available at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/lawsregs/part200.htm>.
- **Part 201 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education** has been updated to include all amendments to that Part through December 2010 and is available at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/lawsregs/part201.htm>.