

Toll Gate PTO Newsletter

October, 2003
Volume 1, Issue 1

Calendar of Events

- October 17, 2003 – Toll Gate Parent Council Meeting
- October 17, 2003-School Pictures
- October 20, 2003-School Board Meeting - 7:30 pm
- October 26, 2003 - YMCA Halloween Parade
- October 28-30, 2003 - Book Fair
- October 28 to October 30, 2002 - Scholastic Book Fair
- October 30, 2003-Family Night -Halloween Party-7:00 pm
- November 3 to 5, 2003 – Early Dismissal - Grades 1-5
- November 6 and 7, 2003 - School Closed

PTO Executive Committee

Co-Presidents-Ned Fletcher (737-8825) and Randee Tengi (737-7198)

Vice President-Catherine Ahmad (818-9239)

Secretary - Sandee Steinberg (818-0470)

Treasurer - Molly Mahn (818-1694)

Home Room Coordinators-Randi Plevy (730-1890) and Frank Jankowski (818-1830)

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER

Dear Parents,

It was wonderful to see so many supportive parents at Back-to-School Night. Current research highlights the unquestionable influence parents have on the intellectual achievement as well as the social and emotional growth when they are involved in school activities. Your presence demonstrates your commitment to the success of your child and our school in general. Thank you for taking the first step in becoming an active partner in your child's future.

This year our district theme is ***Meeting the Needs of All Learners***. We constantly search for ways to maximize the success of all our students and this year is no exception. Our staff will participate in a variety of learning opportunities, which they will then apply to the students in their classrooms. We will also continue our focus on developing our Culture of Respect. Toll Gate's emphasis will be ***Building a Community of Respect through Reflection and Growth***. Additionally, our "We're Writing Right" goal, will expand our literacy connection by focusing on writing (*skills, creativity, and organization of thought*). You will see and hear more about this goal as the year progresses.

As the principal of Toll Gate Grammar School, I believe that it is my responsibility and privilege to not only teach young students but also staff and parents. With that in mind, I am pleased each month to be able to share my ideas as well as research about children and learning with you as well as make my own contribution toward developing a positive home/school partnership. Many of you asked for my notes from my Back-to-School Night speech about ***Raising Happy Children***. It is my pleasure to highlight the main points for you in this newsletter.

I believe that one of the most commonly held intentions by parents is to raise happy children. Why is raising happy children important? Research

(Cont'd on page 2)

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

You might think that the best thing about a small school like Toll Gate is that it's easy to know everyone and communication is rarely a problem. However, I'm still surprised by the number of fellow parents unknown to me, and by how difficult it is at times to spread the word about PTO programs and school activities. The same can be said about how few of the school staff, aside from classroom teachers, are known to many parents.

Principal Bugbee and the PTO Executive Board have been working on new ways to bring the Toll Gate family together. We are beginning to use the Room Parent Coordinators and Room Parents to improve the lines of communication and parental involvement. I'd like to encourage all Head Room Parents to attend the PTO meetings and help make the decisions that influence our classroom programs. And I hope everyone makes it to at least one of the Friday evening coffee socials organized by the Room Parent Coordinators. They provide an opportunity for parents to get to know one another in a smaller setting without the kids in tow. (Since they are in the early evening, you can trade off sitting duties with parents of kids in other grades.)

The Toll Gate Parent Council meets monthly with Ms. Bugbee to discuss a wide range of issues related to the school, curriculum, etc. While everyone should feel free to bring concerns to their attention, we hope to be even more effective this year by actively seeking parent comment. One way we'll do this is by asking TGPC grade representatives to regularly contact Room Parents. News outlets continue to be this newsletter, our Gator Grams (delayed as we await the parent e-mail addresses from the district's new online database) and the expanded PTO web site. There is also now a PTO bulletin board just outside the main office. Useful information and the answers to many questions can be found from these sources, as well as on the school

(Cont'd on page 2)

Principal's Letter Cont'd

indicates that learning is enhanced when students are happy, joyful, and self-content. When kids are focused on what is being taught, they have inner peace and exhibit more confidence, which keeps them out of trouble and helps them become leaders instead of followers. When school-aged children have a positive attitude, their academic performance improves and their creativity, problem solving skills, and social interaction are enhanced. Happy people are also healthier.

The good news is that happy attitudes can be developed. Listed below are some daily actions that can help nurture happiness in your children:

Foster a sense of gratitude. At bedtime or at dinner, help your child describe something for which he or she is grateful. Encourage your child write these ideas in a *Gratitude Journal*.

Promote the habit of happy thoughts. Happy people fill their minds with positive thoughts, resisting the urge to clutter it with worry, negativity, and judgment of others. As Marcus Aurelius said, "The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts."

Help your child understand that failure is neither personal nor permanent. This is very important. Happy people are not those who never fail but those who take reasonable risks and realize that along the way there will be setbacks. Those setbacks are important **life lessons**. Help your child understand that failure is never permanent and if we "fail" at something, it does not mean that we are flawed. Help your child generate ideas that may help him or her succeed next time.

Help your child develop an awareness of his or her unique strengths and talents. Honor your child's natural talents and passions (*the difficult part is when those interests clash with our own expectations*). Supporting your child's passions can increase his or her chance for happiness throughout life.

Model optimistic thinking. Research shows that children primarily learn optimism or pessimism from their parents. Whether you mean to or not,

your reactions, negative or positive, are passed on to your children. A positive attitude can be developed. Note that what we focus on becomes our reality.

Teach your children how to resolve conflicts peacefully. We know that conflicts will always occur and we offer many programs to help teach life skills of conflict resolution here at Toll Gate. Just remember children who can get along better with others are happier people.

Foster a connection to something larger than oneself. When children connect to something, a higher being, nature, the larger world, their vision broadens and they can understand their role in making a difference in the lives of others. This is one reason that we encourage students to become engaged in service projects. It helps our children develop a sense of purpose.

Happy people are healthier, smarter, and succeed better in the world. I hope these ideas are valuable to you. We look forward to another productive year and thriving partnership with you as we contribute to helping your children become happy and successful young people.

Some ideas from *Peaceful Parenting* by Naomi Drew
Fondly,
Myra J. Bugbee
Principal

No Child Left Behind Act

As I mentioned at our first PTO meeting and again at Back-to-School Night, I will share more and more details with you about the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act as they are finalized by the Department of Education. One major component of NCLB refers to highly qualified teachers. According to the law, by the end of the 2005-06 school year, all teachers must be highly qualified. (*In Title I schools that requirement was applicable on the first day of school this year.*) In this section, I will briefly highlight how this provision applies to Toll Gate.

The highly qualified requirement applies to public elementary, middle,

and secondary teachers who teach a core academic subject. The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards define core subjects as language arts literacy, math, science, social studies visual and performing arts, and world languages.

There are three essential components of a highly qualified teacher. The teacher must:

- Have obtained at least a bachelor's degree
- be fully certified by New Jersey, and
- demonstrate competence in each of the core subjects in which he or she teaches.

Teachers demonstrate competence in the subject by:

- passing a rigorous state test, by completing coursework, achieving a graduate degree, or by obtaining national certification OR
- meeting the requirements of a standard of evaluation (HOUSE) which is now being developed. (*This will primarily apply to teachers who were certified before 1985.*)

The highly qualified teacher requirement will impact the middle schools more than the elementary schools unless certain grade levels at the elementary school have departmentalized and teachers teach specific content areas. At Toll Gate, our teachers are elementary generalists and all hold at least a bachelor's degree and are fully certified by New Jersey.

President's Letter Cont'd

district's web site - it's worth the time to get familiar with its features. And of course there are PTO meetings to attend. A number of staff members have been making the effort to attend the PTO meetings. Come and find out who they are.

The year is off to a great start, and lots of work has already been done to make our school the best it can be. Since I've gone on too long already, I'll

save all the well-deserved thanks until the November letter.

Ned Fletcher, PTO Co-president

TOLL GATE PARENT COUNCIL

The parent council representatives for this year are as follows:

Stella Scafidi	PreK
Adrienne Fawcett	K
Kathy Frederick	1 st Gr.
Aida Valcarcel	2 nd Gr.
Bonnie Piper	3 rd Gr.
Susan Huber	4 th Gr.
Tara Russell	5 th Gr.
Ned Fletcher	PTO Rep.
Myra Bugbee	Principal
Ida Chiaradia	V. Principal

The parent council meet once a month to discuss various issues relating to the school. If you have anything you would like to see discussed, please feel free to contact any of the above representatives.

Minutes from the last Toll Gate Parent Council meeting are attached along with minutes from the District Parent Council Meeting.

FRIDAY NIGHT PARENT SOCIALS

Hire a babysitter and bring an appetizer or dessert to share with the parents of other children in your child's class and grade. This is a great way to relax, meet other parents and arrange playdates. The Coffee Socials are held in the cafeteria from 7:00pm to 8:30 pm on the Friday evenings below:

10/10/03	1 st grade
10/17/03	2 nd grade
10/24/03	3 rd grade
11/14/03	4 th & 5 th grade

GIFT WRAP SALE

The PTO Gift Wrap fundraiser took place this year from September 18 through October 3. This year we are

pleased to offer Sally Foster gift wrap, accessories, gift items, and candies. Samples of the top-quality gift wrap are on display on the bulletin board outside of the cafeteria. Our school benefits from every purchase made - 50% on every item sold! Order forms with payment must be returned by October 6 to ensure delivery of items the week of November 17.

You can also offer these great products to out-of-town family and friends using the Sally Foster online store at sallyfoster.com. Our school gets the credit for any on-line order submitted by December 31, 2003. On-line orders will be shipped directly to the customer; however, for orders of less than \$65 the customer will be charged for shipping and handling.

COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM (CAT)

HomeFront: Each year, Toll Gate families donate their **used Halloween costumes**, clean and in good condition, to HomeFront. These costumes will be used at the HomeFront Halloween Party. New this year are donations of children's toothbrushes and toothpaste to be distributed to the children at the party! Donations: October 8 - 20, 2003.

TASK Halloween Candy: This autumn we are collecting both pre and post Halloween to distribute to the children with their dinner on Halloween and Thanksgiving. Donations: October 13- November 3, 2003.

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK): The time has come again for all those who would like to volunteer for the TASK Thanksgiving Dinner. If you are interested in volunteering, please join us at the TASK Thanksgiving Dinner Kick off meeting which will be held in the cafeteria on October 20, 2003 at 9:00am.

Winter Coat Drive: Now that you are pulling out last year's winter clothes, please bring in any unwanted winter coats, clean and in good repair to Toll

Gate. They will be taken to the Rescue Mission of Trenton where they will be distributed. Both children's and adult coats are welcome! Donations: October 13-November 3, 2003.

Designated boxes for candy, costumes, toothbrushes, toothpaste and coats can be found outside the main office.

Questions: Elizabeth Haines 730-4887, Maude Tater 818-0711 or e-mail ebhaines@elizabethbdesign

SMILE - AND SAY CHEESE! IT'S PICTURE DAY - FRIDAY OCTOBER 17, 2003

Order forms will be sent home in your children's backpacks prior to picture day. Fill out the forms and send them into school with full payment by Friday October 17. A retake date will be scheduled in December for children / staff who were absent on picture day and for any families who wish to have their children's photos redone.

All children will be photographed, as these photos are used in the yearbook, however, only those families wishing to purchase photo packages will receive student pictures.

CORPORATE



REWARDS UPDATE

Don't forget! Our first submission deadline for clipped Box Tops labels from General Mills products is coming up on October 31. Please deposit all Box Tops in the collection bin located in the Main Office. Box Tops will be counted and bundled for submission in mid-October.

Have you checked out the Booster Club at www.bboxtops4education.com? The Club offers special coupons and meal ideas, among other things. Toll Gate

gets 5 Bonus Box Tops for every person who joins the Club before March 31, 2004, so JOIN NOW! Toll Gate has 13 Booster Club members already this year.

Toll Gate is earning lots of CASH back this year in the Box Tops for Education Program. To date, we've earned \$15.00 from 3 online Box Tops Marketplace shoppers and \$186.26 from our Box Tops Visa Card holders. Please check out the Marketplace at the Box Tops Web site (noted above) to become a Marketplace shopper and call 1-800-227-9605 (or visit the Box Tops Web site) to become a Box Tops Visa Card holder. Remember that Toll Gate receives a full 1% CASH back from all purchases made with a Box Tops Visa Card. Let's do our best to earn CASH back for our Tollgators!

Toll Gate received its first check from the Target Take Charge of Education Program in September. Thanks to all Target Guest Card/Visa Card holders (76 in all) for earning \$229.39 for our Tollgators! Remember that Target offers a full 1% CASH back for purchases made with a Target Guest Card (good at Target stores only) and up to 1% CASH back for purchases made with a Target Visa Card (good at Target and elsewhere). Visit www.target.com (Financial Services link) to apply for a Target Guest or Visa Card, visit a Target store to apply for a Guest Card or call 1-800-394-1829 to apply for a Target Visa Card.

With Verizon Extra Credit for Schools, 5% of your long distance spending (including calling card and international calls) goes directly to your favorite school. Each quarter, even during the summer, a check is mailed based on the dollars collected for Toll Gate. Call 1-888-223-2051 to sign up for Verizon long distance and to designate Toll Gate as your favorite school. Already have Verizon long distance? Just call 1-877-X CREDIT to sign up for Extra Credit for Schools. For more information about this Verizon program, visit www.verizon.com/extracredit.

Questions? Please call Linda Hilliard at 737-0172 for enlightenment!



NEW PTO INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS!

Writing to your PTO Board has never been easier!

Our new internet address is
tgpto@hvrstd.k12.nj.us

PTO WEB SITE/BULLETIN BOARD

The PTO's web site address is as follows:

<http://www.hvrstd.k12.nj.us/tollgate/home/pto/home.html>

The TGPTO web site has been expanded this year, and is your one-stop-shopping site for PTO information. If you've mistakenly tossed one handout too many, look here! The newsletters and flyers for some events can be found under "Forms and Flyers and Stuff." Forgotten the dates of the Bookfair? Look under "Fundraisers." Budget updates and PTO and TGPC meeting minutes will also be posted.

The PTO now has a bulletin board on the wall opposite the Main Office.

Please remember: You are a member of the PTO! Come to the meetings to participate in the decision making (and learn lots about what's going on at Toll Gate and the district), volunteer to help at an event, support a fundraiser - they're all important ways you can contribute to and support our wonderful school.

GATOR GRAMS

The PTO will soon begin to use Gator Grams to send timely email messages to parents. If you chose to provide a family e-mail address when you filled out your child's directory information online, then you will automatically be subscribed to this service, and your email address will be printed in the directory. If you did not provide a family email address and would like to receive Gator Grams, please send an email to tgpto@hvrstd.k12.nj.us

DIRECTORIES

This year, all of the information for the TG directory must come from the district's new online emergency information system. Delays in getting information on all students into the system has resulted in a late start on the directory. We hope to receive the data from the district shortly, and will print and distribute the TG directory as soon as possible. If you still haven't gone online to put in your child's information, please do so immediately at <http://www.hvrstd.k12.nj.us/district/alert.htm>

SCHOOL CLOSING

Implementation of the new CAN system for emergency closings has replaced the human touch we used in the past to contact you of school closings, early dismissals, and delayed openings. Beginning this year, an automated system will make calls to the numbers you provided to the online emergency information system in the event of an early dismissal or school emergency. It is important to note that this system will not be used to inform parents of school closings prior to the start of the school day or delayed openings. Parents have several ways of getting this information including the district's web site (<http://www.hvrstd.k12.nj.us>) the district's emergency email notification list

(<http://www.hvrsd.k12.nj.us/forms/emergencycontact.asp> to subscribe), or by calling the 24-hour recorded message phone line at 737-8449.

A MESSAGE FROM THE LIBRARY

I am thrilled to have this opportunity to express my excitement with being at Toll Gate Grammar School. I have found the Toll Gate School Community so warm and welcoming wherever I go. The parents and children express their love of books and libraries. My colleagues venture into the library without hesitation to enjoy the wonderful books that have amassed there. I think this "love of literature" is a testament to the previous librarians who fostered the love of books. With this in mind, I humbly try to continue their wonderful legacy.

I will continue many of the enriching programs that the children (and parents) have enjoyed, but I will try some new, innovative ways to engage the children in literature and informational literacy. This month, I want to explore new avenues of library enjoyment. The first will be a lunchtime book discussion group called, "Chew and Chat." This group will meet to discuss favorite children's novels and share lots of laughs. To keep our research skills sharp, we will have a contest called, "Super Sleuth." There will be a topic and a question with three clues, and our junior sleuths will have to find the answer using their research skills. Hey, do you know what amphibian uses its eyes to help itself swallow? Your children will soon know the answer.

To have the Toll Gate Media Center hum smoothly, we need the most crucial element for its success – you. The parent volunteers provide hours of important volunteer time with their duties of shelving, reading shelves, mending and covering books. If you would like to join our merry band of volunteers please contact the Media Center at 737-4008. An orientation meeting for the parent volunteers will be held on October 7 at 9:00 am.

Finally, the gift program will continue, but with a new twist. Barnes and Noble had the books on consignment at Back-to-School Night. If you missed that opportunity to peruse the books, please contact me. Remember, you can donate a book to the media center in honor of your child's birthday. A nameplate will bear your child's name and she or he will be the first to check out the book.

I'm looking forward to meeting you during the year.

NEWS FROM THE SPECTRUM OFFICE

Welcome back! Each new school year brings with it new and exciting opportunities for your children. It is our hope to better acclimate all parents' understanding of the Spectrum program so that your children will enjoy the benefits of our program. Each month we will include the current happenings and upcoming events of Spectrum in this newsletter.

The following is a brief description of our Spectrum program: Spectrum is our school wide enrichment program. It consists of:

- ICE – (In Class Enrichment) lessons for students in Grades 3 through 5
- A.L.M. (Advanced Level Math) for Grades 4 and 5
- A.L.L. (Advanced Level Language) for Grades 3 through 5
- Enrichment Study Trips which will begin this year with a Schooner Trip in October
- Type III's (Independent Investigative Research) to be presented at the DISTRICT Spectrum Fair on May 17th

All students may participate in our Spectrum Program. Please stop by the ALM and Spectrum teachers' classroom(s) for more information. Also, please note that the Gifted and Talented Program is under review this year. The committee expects to make recommendations to the Board in early 2004.

Toll Gate's first major Spectrum event of the year is the annual Schooner trip on the A.J. Meerwald, New Jersey's official tall ship. This

year's trip was Friday, October 3. The schooner is listed on the National Register of Historic Places - it is an authentically restored Delaware Bay oyster schooner. Its main function now is educational purposes for children and college students. We spent three hours studying about the Delaware Bay Watershed (marine life, pollution, etc.) while under sail from Port Norris, NJ. It was a wonderful day!

Toll Gate students in grades 4 & 5 were offered the opportunity to participate in this activity. Since there were only 40 available spots on the boat, students were asked to write a letter of interest explaining why they would like to go on the trip. Students who attended will also be responsible for a work project that will be due in November and displayed in our Media Center.

Advanced Level Math (ALM) has already begun, as well as ALL in grade 5. Grade 4 students nominated and accepted into the program will be beginning the year with Junior Great Books. Grade 5 students nominated and accepted into the program will be beginning the year turning the Mock Trial case into a play. Grade 3 ALL will begin in November.

Please feel free to contact me at 737-4008 x8242 or via e-mail at cchalela@hvrsd.k12.nj.us for any questions or concerns in any area of the Spectrum program. I look forward to a happy and productive year with you and your children.

Sincerely,

Carol Chalela
Spectrum Teacher

GET YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING LIST READY AND PUT THIS ON YOUR CALENDAR!!!

Jazams Toy Sale/PTO Fundraiser will be held Thursday, November 20.

Come out to Jazams' Pennington Store on the evening of Thursday, November 20 to mingle with friends, eat some good munchies, stash away presents for the kids, and help the TGG PTO raise money for the many good things we do every year. A portion of all sales during this event will be donated to the PTO.

The TGG PTO will also be offering CHILDCARE at Toll Gate for our Jazams shoppers. That's right! Drop your kids off and shop child-free! This will be a great opportunity to get that holiday shopping for the kids done!

So, the more the merrier. Bring your family and friends to eat and shop for a good cause. Put this on your

calendar now and don't miss this truly fun evening.

Time and childcare details will follow in a flyer soon. If you have any questions or would like to help out, please call Frank Jankoski (818-1380) or Tracy Meyer (737-6733).



