

National PTA Aims to Help Schools Build Partnerships

By Ginny Markell,
National PTA President

The National PTA represents more than 6.5 million parents and educators who are committed to improving education for children. We know that children learn best when families and schools collaborate for student success.

In 1997, the PTA issued its *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs*. The standards are based on Dr. Joyce Epstein's framework of six types of involvement that is used by the National Network of Partnership Schools, and on other research on parental involvement.

Now, the PTA is introducing a new volume, *Building Successful Partnerships*, which offers field-tested strategies for overcoming barriers, reaching out to key participants, developing effective parent involvement, and improving student success. It should be useful to school administrators, teachers, parent involvement professionals, Title I coordinators, Action Team chairs or co-chairs, and leaders of PTAs and other parent organizations. The book (available for \$18.95) is published by the National Educational Service in Bloomington, IN. A preview of the book may be viewed at www.nesonline.com, or call 800-733-6786 for information.

The National PTA is working to make parent involvement the foundation upon which all other education reform efforts are based. PTA leaders will be trained in bringing this message to schools and communities

District Record

Team Leaders of Baltimore Area Schools Start the Year with a Good Breakfast

The facilitator of the Southwest Area of Baltimore City Public Schools wanted to build on the momentum of summer Action Team training, so she planned a special event for Action Team chairs to start the school year. Having been a school Action Team chair and now a district-level Facilitator, Marsha Greenfeld knew how important the ability and the enthusiasm of the Action Team chair was to the success of a school, family, and community partnership program.

Breakfast is Served

With the support of her Area Executive Officer (AEO), Ms. Greenfeld planned a breakfast meeting for all Action Team chairs in her Area. She chose a comfortable setting outside of a school so that there would not be conflicts with cafeteria schedules or other distractions. Ms. Greenfeld arranged for "The Omelet Man"—a local caterer—to prepare omelets-to-order for all attendees.

Presentations are Made

Ms. Greenfeld prepared the content of the meeting by inviting a few speakers from outside of her Area to discuss the strengths of the National Network of Partnership Schools, the six types of involvement, designing an effective Action Team, and implementing a One-Year Action Plan for partnerships. One presenter was Jackie Griswold, Action Team Chairperson from Curtis Bay Elementary, who shared her ideas and successes. "Griswold was able to reassure the new chairs that progress comes in small, incremental steps. She did an excellent job mapping out an effective path that all Action Teams could

follow," said Ms. Greenfeld. After the speakers' presentations, the new chairs asked questions. "The questions gave me insights into how I can best help my schools," Ms. Greenfeld noted.

Information is Provided

Ms. Greenfeld also supplied helpful materials for Action Team chairs. Many of the handouts came from *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, including Who are the Members of Your Action Team? and Action Team Structures. A brochure also was included which described the Southwest Area's school, family, and community partnership program, and listed the names and phone numbers of all Action Team chairs in the Area.

"This activity presented me with a powerful springboard from which I could dive into my work. The new Action Team chairs experienced a sense of relief and showed renewed confidence in their leadership. They had a stronger vision of their responsibilities at their schools," stated Ms. Greenfeld. She also scheduled initial conferences with chairpersons that she had not been able to contact. "The success of this activity was well worth the price of \$6.99 per person for The Omelet Man. This activity helped me begin my relationships with the new Action Team chairs in a positive and motivating way, and to bring them a great deal of information in an efficient manner," noted Ms. Greenfeld.

For more information see: "An 'Eggciting' Beginning," Promising Partnership Practices—1998, National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University.