

October 2006

Volume 25

Number 1

Syllabus



Phi Delta Kappa

Chapter 1144

President's Message

Dear Kappans,

Don't you just love a new school year? I've had the privilege of beginning the school year in a number of towns and from a number of perspectives. When my children were little, I taught two-and-a-half year olds two mornings a week. The first day of school meant weepy eyes and runny noses – *of the moms*. After my assistant cajoled agonized parents out the door and into the hall, toddlers explored the room with thoughtful tentativeness that turned into sheer delight.

My first assignment after graduating from college was the sixth grade in an aging elementary school building. The first words I heard from a student that day came from a very tall, stocky boy named Steven. "So how tall are you anyway?" That broke the ice as giggling eleven-year-olds searched the room with their eyes and flipped through the well worn textbooks on their desks.

Another year, my first day of school was in a middle school. Excitement ran high as they plotted to avoid eighth graders as they spread their pre-teen wings.

Last year, my first day of school was at George Mason University. The University was abuzz with excited students whose ages ranged from seventeen to well over fifty. It was another wonderful first day.

No matter how young or old my students are, the first day of school crackles with excitement and anticipation. The new year promises new challenges, new opportunities, and in some cases, a chance for new beginnings.

That is how I feel about our new PDK year. Our board is filled with talented colleagues from every walk of academic life who are committed to serving this organization. We are planning stimulating events where we can all learn in the company of fellow educators.

Please join us at our dinner meetings and Joint Forum as we "Continue the Celebration" and "Celebrate and Advocate Public Education." See you there; we'll be looking for you!

Sincerely,
Jeannine Tate
President

2006-2007 Board of Directors

Phi Delta Kappa Chapter 1144

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Submitting Information for the
Syllabus? Please e-mail your article
to jperlman@acps.k12.va.us

The Walk for Education isHere!

Please join us Saturday October 21

This year it's the big one!!! We'll take our annual Walk for Education this year with PDK'ers from around the country. We're combining our local Walk with the national Walk. Of course **60% of the money we raise still will stay with Chapter 1144 for our own Forever Gifts.** PDK International will use the balance to support its scholarships and other education-related programs through the PDK International Education Foundation.

Want to register?? Contact Tracy Stephens at tstephen@loudoun.k12.va.us or visit the official Walk website at www.pdkintl.org (let Tracy know you're registering through PDK International.) Tracy will fax or forward to you the registration form and pledge form and additional information.

Details including the course and exact times will follow from Tracy. Walkers are required to raise \$50 in pledges (or can pledge the full amount themselves) and must submit any money raised the day of the walk. All walkers who raise \$50 or more will receive a free t-shirt and wrist band.

Contact: Tracy Stephens at tstephen@loudoun.k12.va.us

Want More National Conference Info?

Here's how to get it

Join PDK International for its Summit on Public Education October 19-21 at the Capital Hilton in Washington D.C.

Summit events include:

- A panel discussion on No Child Left Behind, moderated by John Merrow, anchor of The Merrow Report.
- A keynote speech by John Goodlad, author of *What Schools Are For*.
- Entertainment by the Capitol Steps.
- The PDK 100th Anniversary Gala Dinner Dance.

Contact: www.pdkintl.org for registration details and more events.

PHI DELTA KAPPA is an international association of professional educators. Our mission is to promote quality education, with particular emphasis on publicly supported education, as essential to the development and maintenance of a democratic way of life.

Phi Delta Kappa Chapter 1144

2006-2007 Programs

Celebrate, Advocate, Public Education

Date	Event/Speaker	Location
<p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday October 18, 2006</p> <p>This is a Regional Meeting with representatives of several other PDK chapters in the Northern Virginia area to kick off the National Conference.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Jeannine Tate Director of Field Relations and Undergraduate Studies in Education College of Education George Mason University</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Topic: Dealing With Difficult People</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Country Club of Fairfax</p>

Don't miss this opportunity to hear our own Jeannine Tate offer some *very* helpful tips on this *very* important topic

Upcoming events:

- Wednesday December 6, Dinner Meeting and exciting activities.

Evenings include distinguished speakers and the opportunity to become a member of many wonderful and worthwhile committees. Also, built-in are great conversation with professional colleagues and an excellent meal prepared by Chef Robo of the Country Club of Fairfax.

Wednesday, October 18 Meeting

When: Wednesday, October 18, 2006
5:00 pm -- social time

Where: Country Club of Fairfax
5110 Ox Road
Fairfax, VA

Menu: Full Dinner Buffet

Cost: \$28

To make a reservation or for further information please contact Jennifer Jacobs. **If you must cancel a reservation please contact Jennifer at Jennifer.A.Jacobs@fcps.edu or at 703-921-2405 by noon on October 18 to avoid a payment of \$28**

Payment is required if you have made a reservation and don't cancel by noon on the day of the event.

Directions: 1.5 miles south of George Mason University, on Route 123 (Ox Road). Call 703-273-3100 for further assistance.

Chapter 1144 Is Busy, Busy, Busy

❖ Chapter 1144 Educators in Action Grants

This year we have up to 10 grants for up to \$250 each....
and

you can get them throughout the year...not just in May!!!

(Use the application inserted into this issue of e-Syllabus)

The PDK Educators In Action Grant supports teacher or administrator research and innovative programs. As part of our chapter's strong commitment to public education, PDK Chapter 1144 will award \$250 to selected grant proposals throughout the school year. **Applications for Educators In Action grants will be accepted from November 1, 2006 to April 1, 2007.** Grants awarded at our PDK dinner meetings can be used to support research or innovative programs during the current school year.

Applications should include a statement on how your proposal will affect students, a timeline, and a budget. Past grants were awarded to **Megan Garnett, Robinson Secondary**, for "Operation Observation" to help recruit and train students to observe pre-service teachers; **Larry Ciarelli, Jefferson-Houston School for Arts and Academics**, for "Kinder Kits" to help parents accelerate their kindergarten students who did not pass the Fall PALS benchmark; and **Tom Wagner, Hayfield Secondary**, to help students research and complete crayon resist drawings of Virginia plants and animals for a mural at Fairfax Hospital for Children.

As the new school year opens, do you have an idea for an innovative program or research that will "Make a Difference?" Please complete the application inserted into this issue and forward it anytime between November 1, 2006 and April 1, 2007 to: Educators in Action Committee c/o Beth Ridpath, Washington Mill Elementary School, 9100 Cherry Tree Drive, Alexandria, VA 22309.

Contact: Rosemary.Wilhelm@fcps.edu or Beth.Ridpath@fcps.edu .

❖ Is There Someone In Your School Who Is "Making a Difference?"

Nominate that person for our Making A Difference Award

Yes, there probably is. So, let's honor that person. Chapter 1144 has a tradition of honoring at each meeting a colleague who is making a difference in the field of education...a teacher, an administrator, a support staff member...someone who is there always when you need them. Someone who is a local dynamo, who leads the charge, who is the core, the heart and soul of your operation.

We all know someone who deserves recognition for a job well done.

Well, here's an ideal way to honor that person. Nominate your colleague for a Chapter 1144 Making A Difference Award. It's easy to do. Just tell us why that person makes a difference to your staff.

Contact: Jeannine Tate at jtate1@gmu.edu .

❖ **Let's Donate More Books Next Summer to Area Second Language Learners**

Chapter 1144's Forever Gifts can get it done

Forever Gifts are Chapter 1144's way of supporting hundreds of second language learners throughout the Northern Virginia area. Our Forever Gifts program last year purchased enjoyable high quality trade books for many, many second language students in Fairfax County, Arlington County, Alexandria and Falls Church City public schools. Thank you for your overwhelming support last year and thank you again in advance for your continued support this year.

Supporting the program is easy. Just slip a contribution into the Forever Gifts envelope at your table at every Chapter 1144 dinner meeting, or round up your dinner meeting payment a dollar or two as you walk in. Can't make it to the meeting? You can forward a contribution to our Forever Gifts committee.

Contact: Ginny.Doherty@acps.k12.va.us .

❖ **Going Once, Going Twice.....Who Doesn't Love An Auction?**

Our last one was so successful we're doing it again

Coming in December....maybe.

Our last silent auction was so successful that we're doing it again. We'll need a little help, though, to make it work.

All proceeds will support the Chapter 1144 Scholarship Fund (start thinking about those high school seniors you know who want a career in education), our Forever Gifts, and the 10 for \$250 Educator in Action Grants.

Shhhhhh. Don't tell how much you're willing to bid for your favorite item, but DO tell us you're willing to help....just a little bit.

Contact: Jeannine Tate, jtate1@gmu.edu .

❖ **Mark Your Calendars**

Some dates to remember

- October 18, 5 p.m. dinner meeting at the Country Club of Fairfax
- October 19-21 – PDK National Conference in Washington DC
- October 21 – PDK Walk for Education
- December 6 – dinner meeting
- February 7 –a unique joint forum with George Mason University and Virginia Tech/UVa chapters
- March 3 – we support the FCPS Future Professionals Conference for Middle School Girls
- April 18 and May 9—dinner meetings (Board elections and installation)

Application for Educators in Action Grant

Phi Delta Kappa, Northern Virginia Chapter 1144

The Educators in Action Grant supports educator's research projects or innovative programs with awards up to \$250.

An applicant must be a full time teacher or administrator in Northern Virginia. Applicants who are not members in good standing of Phi Delta Kappa must have an endorsement from a member in good standing of PDK Chapter 1144. Applicants who are awarded a grant will be asked to submit a report following the completion of their projects within a year after the award is presented.

Directions:

1. Complete the application form.
2. Attach an abstract of the proposal which should include the rationale or research question, research method, timeline (if appropriate), and budget. Limit each topic to one page.
3. Obtain Sponsor's Endorsement (non-members only).
4. Submit completed application after November 1, 2006 and before April 1, 2007 to:
Educators in Action Committee
c/o Beth Ridpath
Washington Mill Elementary School
9100 Cherry Tree Drive
Alexandria, VA 22301

Name:

Home Address:

Work Address:

Home Phone:

E-mail address:

Current Position:

Work Phone:

Title of Proposal:

Sponsor's Endorsement

(If applicant is not a member of PDK Chapter 1144)

I am a member in good standing of PDK Chapter 1144 and I endorse this proposal.

Name (type or print)

Signature

What's Happening??? (Share the good news about your school)

Send news about your school to Syllabus editor jperlman@acps.k12.va.us

- **Higher Achievement Program Holds Ribbon Cutting**

The award-winning **Higher Achievement Program** launched its first Virginia center this month in conjunction with the **Alexandria City Public Schools**. The center is designed to help middle-school students develop their talents, improve their grades and prepare them for the academic challenges of high school.

The not-for-profit program started in Washington, D.C. 30 years ago and serves as a national model for out-of-school academics. In its inaugural full year with ACPS the program will serve approximately 60 students in grades five through eight who are motivated to learn but who face one or more risk factors.

A Higher Achievement Summer Academy in Alexandria successfully served 42 students with a mix of accelerated classes in math, literature and social studies and after school electives, including artistic studios, academic contests and field trips.

Contact: Mary Jane Solomon 703 824-6635 or www.higherachievement.org .

- **More Than 500 Students Celebrate International Walk to School Day**

More than 500 students from **James K. Polk, Charles E. Barrett and George Mason elementary schools (Alexandria City Public Schools)** helped highlight a new statewide Safe Routes to Schools program by walking to school and participating in a variety of activities designed to promote exercise, pedestrian and bicycle safety, concern for the environment and an opportunity for parents and children to spend time together.

The event was part of a 10th Annual International Walk to School Day which is celebrated by schools in 36 countries.

The new state Safe Routes to Schools project will provide more than \$13.5 million to support child/school/pedestrian safety.

Contact: Yon Lambert, City of Alexandria Pedestrian and Bicycle Coordinator, 571-220-0842.

You Can Use This Information And It's Free (from PDK)

www.pdkintl.org

The Latest From.....

PDK/Gallup Poll – The Results are In

The 38th annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools confirms again that the public overwhelmingly supports the notion of public education. The Poll also finds that those who think schools should improve believe that improvement should come through existing public schools and not through an alternative system.

Other findings include:

--Public ratings of local schools are near the top of their 38-year range.

--The closer people get to the schools in their communities the higher the grades they give them.

--Gaining public support for school improvement will be more likely if proposals are based on the schools in the community and not on the nation's schools.

--The percentage favoring vouchers dropped from 38% a year ago to 36% this year, while opposition grew from 57% to 60%.

What's more, most of the public now believes that problems confronting schools today stem more from societal issues and not from the quality of schooling.

On testing, the Poll indicates that:

--A majority of respondents still support testing at current levels, although there may be a trend toward a belief of "too much testing."

--A large and growing number of respondents believe testing forces schools to "teach to the test" which a near consensus consider a "bad thing."

On No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Poll indicates:

--Of those who say they know about NCLB, seven out of 10 believe it is either making no difference in local schools or is hurting them.

--A majority of respondents (54%) oppose the NCLB requirement that test scores be broken out by race and ethnicity, English-speaking ability, and poverty level. That's up 6% from 2005.

--Nearly two-thirds of respondents say the scores of special education students should not be included in determining whether a school is in need of improvement. Three-fourths of respondents believe special education students should not be tested against the same standards as other students. That's up 7% since last year.

--A full 81% of respondents say the proper measure of performance is the improvement made by students during the school year. That's down 4% from last year.

Want more information? See the September, 2006 Phi Delta Kappan or visit the PDK website at www.pdkintl.org.

News and Noteworthy thanks to Education Week

The U.S. Department of Education has rejected a plea to ease up on rules which require schools to include the scores of what could be most English language learners in final NCLB totals.

New rules which take effect October 13 require schools to include in their NCLB totals scores of English language learners who have attended U.S. schools for 12 months or more. These replace old rules which required schools to include scores of those in U.S. schools for 10 months or more.

When the Department asked earlier for comments about the issue, many suggested that the definition of "recently arrived" English language learners be expanded from 12 months to five years, or to tie the definition to a student's English-language proficiency. Opponents of the 12-month definition said it fails to distinguish between many types of English language learners or their individual needs.

A representative of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic-advocacy group, however, said the 12-month definition could force states to develop valid assessments for English language learners.

Education Week reports that the proportion of public schools meeting required NCLB targets seems to have fallen slightly in the 2005-2006 school year, while the percent "needing improvement" has increased.

The results of an analysis by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center seems to indicate that schools find it harder to show adequate yearly progress under the law as the number of students tested grew and performance targets rose over time. Observers suggest the trend could be because standards are getting more stringent, people are expecting more, and states are being more honest in their

accounting. Observers also attribute the slide possibly to a larger number of tests given last school year. EW reports that nationally the percent of rated schools making AYP dropped from 75% to 71% while the percent in need of improvement rose from 13 to 17 percent.

Want to improve learning? Want students to retain more of what they've learned? EW has previewed several federally funded studies currently underway and has found preliminary data showing:

- Students may retain more of what they've learned if practice tests are given weeks after, rather than immediately after a teacher presents the material.
- Learning benefits are greatest when tests are composed of short-answer rather than multiple-choice questions. Learning seems to stick when students must generate their own answers to questions.
- How about guessing at answers? One paper due out soon says students who guessed incorrectly at questions in a tutoring program performed equally well as those who got answers right the first time. Why? Quick corrective feedback to fix the answers. The study says feedback was the most important key to learning.

Utah school fines students for being late or for missing class. Starting with a third "tardy" or a fourth absence, including excused absences, students at a high school in Riverton, Utah will have to pay \$2 and \$3 fines for each occurrence to go to attendance school. A similar policy at another Utah high school appears to have boosted attendance about 14%, says EW.

Michigan girls entering 6th grade next year would have to be vaccinated against the sexually transmitted human papilloma virus, according to a measure introduced in the Michigan Senate by a bipartisan group of female lawmakers. EW reports that government and advocacy groups have urged vaccination before girls enter middle school.

Want to sell your lesson plans or worksheets? Check out TeachersPayTeachers.com. It works this way. Teachers pay \$29.95 per year to post plans and activities on the site. Then they set a price, from a dollar or two on up. Buyers decide the fate of the products and....they can rate them to warn or to encourage other potential customers.

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