

MASSACHUSETTS PTA in ACTION #3

Legislative and Advocacy News ★★ July/August, 2006

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★★ WELCOME ★★

Massachusetts PTA's Legislative E-newsletter is designed to help you advocate on behalf of children, families and schools. PTA is most powerful when members work together.

This newsletter is a benefit of your PTA membership. It contains news and resources you can use to help you play a leadership role in making children a high priority in your community, and at the state and national level with your legislators and other policy makers. If you have questions about PTA positions on education, health, safety, wellness and other PTA priorities please contact Ellie Goldberg, vplegislation@masspta.org

We welcome your feedback and suggestions for topics and issues. If you do not want to receive this newsletter, you can unsubscribe at www.masspta.org/newsletters&updates/.

★★ THE HEALTHY SCHOOL CHECK UP ★★

September 2006 is National Preparedness Month.

Too many schools, old and new, harbor large quantities of explosives, flammables and other hazardous chemicals in labs, closets, classrooms and storerooms.

TAKE ACTION to improve your school's chemical security.

GET SMART about chemical management. As a PTA leader, you can raise awareness of resources that can save your school money and help your school prevent explosions and fires – from accidents and intentional acts.

I IDENTIFY AND ELIMINATE HAZARDS before there is an accident and people get hurt.

PREVENT EXPLOSIONS. Ask your principal these questions:

1. Does my school have a chemical inventory?
2. Does my school have a comprehensive chemical management plan?
3. Does my school have a chemical hygiene officer?

If the answer to any of these questions is "no," your school needs an immediate checkup and safety drill.

REACH OUT to school officials, other parents, your local health department, fire department, and state agencies who are responsible for helping schools manage and dispose of chemical hazards.

★★ PTA IN ACTION: SHARE THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES WITH YOUR SCHOOL ★★

★ The Laboratory Safety Institute (LSI)

www.labsafety.org

LSI's mission is to make health and safety an integral part of science education, our work, and our lives. Go to the LSI website for resources about chemical hazards, lab safety, and safety leadership for staff and teachers at all grade levels.

Is your school an LSI member? You can make a gift of an LSI membership or a subscription to the LSI newsletter, *Speaking of Safety*. Find a safety training program in your area at www.labsafety.org/schedule.htm.

LSI's founder, James Kaufman, emphasizes the importance of schools teaching safely and teaching safely. Teachers who enforce safety rules not only avoid accidents in school but they give their students the skills and attitudes necessary to safeguard their future families and co-workers and "to live safer healthier longer lives."

FREE: September is National Preparedness Month. Back to School 2006: Help Prevent Explosions In Your School

www.nlse.org/images/pdf/back_to_school_2006.pdf

CONTENTS

September is
National Preparedness Month

THE HEALTHY SCHOOL CHECK UP

PTA IN ACTION: SHARE THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES WITH YOUR SCHOOL:

- ★ The Laboratory Safety Institute (LSI)
- ★ National Preparedness Month
- ★ US EPA Chemical Cleanout Campaign!
- ★ Massachusetts School Mentoring Program

COMMUNICATING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS



WHAT IS YOUR SCHOOL'S
CHEMICAL IQ?

Hazardous chemicals are used in every school in both the maintenance of schools and the curriculum. A chemical inventory lists the hazardous chemicals in science classes, labs, storerooms, art classes (such as photography, jewelry, painting, or ceramics), in vocational shops such as auto body, auto repair and printing, and in facility maintenance and operations such as cleaning, painting, and pest control. The proper use of chemicals and hazards management (storage, labeling, disposal) is vital for reducing injuries and preventing costly property damage.

SPEAKING OF SAFETY: In an April 2005 interview for the project, *Lessons of the 1937 Texas School Explosion*, Kaufman emphasized that safety rules and regulations are the lessons we learn from other people's mistakes and short cuts. "What rules really are, are monuments; they are *gravestones*," he said. "It's not that safety people sit up late trying to figure out how to make it take longer and cost more money and irritate the living daylight out of their colleagues. It's that – as night follows day – if you do what those people did, sooner or later, you are going to get the same result." Kaufman said his father once asked him, "Jim, what's the difference between school and life? Well, in life the test comes first and the lesson comes afterwards."

YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK. The following state and federal government agency resources are free. Put them to work for your school.

★ September 2006 National Preparedness Month

<http://www.ready.gov>

National Preparedness Month is a nationwide effort to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and schools. Throughout September, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will work with a wide variety of organizations to highlight the importance of family emergency preparedness and promote individual involvement through events and activities across the nation.

★ Join the US EPA Chemical Cleanout Campaign!

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserveschools/index.htm>

Find these brochures online:

Chemicals in Schools: Solutions for Healthy School Environments (For K-12 schools)

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserveschools/pdfs/solutions.pdf>

School leaders play a pivotal role in keeping schools safe from chemical accidents. You can assemble a team of teachers, facilities staff, and administrators with technical expertise to assess chemical safety issues and set policy. Some important team roles are outlined in this brochure.

Chemicals in Schools: Partners for Healthy School Environments (For Community Partners)

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserveschools/pdfs/partner.pdf>

Every year, throughout the country, hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent on K-12 school accidents involving chemicals. When improperly used or stored, chemicals can put students, staff, and the community at risk from spills, explosions, or other accidental exposure.

★ Massachusetts School Mentoring Program

http://www.mass.gov/envir/ota/programs/school_mentoring.htm

Sue Lanza, Office of Technical Assistance for Toxics Use Reduction, 617-626-1068

CALLING ALL MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS! Thirteen chemical safety mentors are waiting to help you. The School Mentoring Program helps schools clean out chemical hazards and learn safer chemical management.

GET A MENTOR. The Massachusetts Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) matches schools with chemical safety professionals who donate their time and expertise to train teachers and facility managers in proper chemical purchase, use, storage and disposal and help develop comprehensive chemical management plans.

SAVE MONEY. Schools that adopt a streamlined and coordinated chemical purchasing system can avoid unnecessary chemical purchases and also avoid hazardous waste and compliance expenses.

TEACH SAFELY The Mentor Program is a cost-effective way to improve chemical safety in science, art and vocational classes as well as enhance safety in maintenance and facility operations throughout a school system.

TEACH SAFETY Mentors can help science teachers to improve their safety practices as well as to comply with environmental regulations and other legal obligations. Teachers can learn the latest practices such as "green" chemistry and "microscale" laboratories, providing a state-of-the-art education for their students who are interested in science, engineering, and other technical professions.

ROLE MODELS At Wayland High School Lucy Servidio, from Capaccio Environmental Engineering, has been part of a team of teachers, administrators and facilities managers improving chemical waste management and wastewater disposal in the Science and Art Departments. Boston Scientific Corporation held an on-site safety awareness workshop for Natick High School. Roy Barker worked with the science department to train teachers to improve chemical management and safety in the classroom, laboratory preparation and chemical storage rooms.

OTA is especially interested in matching mentors with schools in Boston, Lawrence, Lowell, Hopkinton, Sturbridge, Taunton, Canton, Braintree, and Salem.

★ ★ COMMUNICATING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS ★ ★ <http://capwiz.com/npta2/issues/basics/?style=comm>

★ National PTA Member to Member Sign Up <http://capwiz.com/npta2/mlm/signup/>

★ National PTA Issues and Action <http://capwiz.com/npta2/home/>

★ National PTA Resolutions and Position Statements http://www.pta.org/ia_category_details_1141755338062.html

★ Contact Your State Representative or Senator <http://www.state.ma.us/legis.htm>

★ Massachusetts PTA in Action, Ellie Goldberg, Massachusetts VP Legislation, vplegislation@masspta.org