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# The United Parents Group



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**2003-04**

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Contact us at  
UPG @Cheltenham.org

## **Parents Instigate for School Improvement**

Each month, Superintendent Chris McGinley, school board members, some of Cheltenham's top administrators, and parents meet to discuss how to maintain excellence in Cheltenham's schools.

Sometimes a building principal, a township commissioner, or PA Representative Larry Curry also attends. Perhaps this is the only group of its kind in Pennsylvania. Is it a secret society? In fact, it is the United Parents Group, UPG.

UPG's board is made up of an Executive Committee (see sidebar) along with a UPG Representative from each school and the presidents from each school's parent-teacher group. Attendance is open to everyone.

Parents determine the direction of each meeting. Each UPG meeting begins with fifteen minutes of networking, followed by a program that varies from month to month. A

speaker may be scheduled to address an issue for which parents have expressed an interest; typically, some time is spent sharing parent concerns. It is not uncommon for someone to state a personal concern only to find that he or she is not alone in that regard. Often parents find when voicing a vexing issue of their own, a common concern is uncovered which rouses concerted action by the group.

Most importantly, parents participate, have their questions answered by school leaders, and share in ways the school system can be improved. Parents leave feeling they have contributed to making a difference on behalf of all our children. They know what's going on and can influence decisions within the district. Moreover, any parent can become a part of this powerful "secret society" by attending UPG meetings.

## **Did You Know...?**

... "I don't have any homework" may never be heard again! Starting second semester, parents of students in grades 5-12 will be able to check their child's test scores online.

... your school PTO will be seeking parents to serve on a "food services committee" with the principal and the cafeteria manager.

... [www.paprofiles.org](http://www.paprofiles.org) features information by *Standard and Poor's* which evaluates and compares PA school districts' academic achievement and organization.

... the Cheltenham School board meets *as a committee* on a regular basis. These meetings are open to the public, and they reveal the school directors at work, discussing the issues before it.

... Cheltenham High School stands out as the first school to participate in a special seminar, *Constitutional Scholars' Program*, at the new National Constitution Center in Philadelphia.

... UPG's Parent Workshop is scheduled for March 22 at 7:15 in the evening. Mark your 2004 calendar and save the date.

... our district Superintendent does an Educational Affairs and Business Affairs update at every UPG meeting and stays to answer questions.

... the Cheltenham Foundation (a non-profit school district organization), which provides grants for individual school projects, is looking for volunteers.

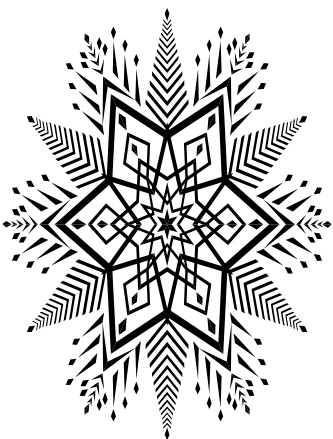
# The United Parents Group

## Mission Statement

The United Parents Group (UPG), an umbrella organization comprised of parent representatives from all the public schools in the Cheltenham School District, serves as a vehicle to facilitate communication among parents, administration and the school board to ensure the continued excellence of education provided by the District.

Please, check us out on the web

[www.cheltenham.org/UPG/upg-pto.htm](http://www.cheltenham.org/UPG/upg-pto.htm)



## News Flash!

- The turn-out for the Meet the Candidates Night broke all previous records.
- Watch for the Channel 42 broadcasts with parents and administrators from Glenside Elementary and Elkins Park School, which will air at 10:30 AM and 11:00 PM.
- UPG is providing a free babysitting service at its evening meeting. Reservations will be necessary so look for future UPG announcements.
- All school board Legislative Affairs Meetings are broadcast on Cable Channel 42, and they include UPG highlights of every school's activities.

*UPG will hold its next meeting, Wednesday, December 17, at 9:15 A.M. in room 119 of the Administration Building. We will be preparing topics of interest for the new year. Sample us by coming late or leaving early as your schedule demands. Stop by and enjoy a cup of coffee, express an opinion, or just listen.*

## From the Desk of...the Director of Gifted and Support Services

*Each issue of the UPG Newsletter will feature a message from the office of a school District administrator. This month we feature Anne Spector.*

The fall of 2003 has been a busy one in the Office for Gifted and Support Programs. New and established programs are offered to our Cheltenham students and families from birth to beyond high school.

If you know a family with a child from birth to five years old, please tell them to contact us at 215-881-6349, the Baby's First Book voice mailbox. Baby's First Book will help us promote early literacy as well as make an early school connection with our families with very young children.

Once the student enters Cheltenham, we offer a full menu of support and enrichment programs. S.M.A.R.T. is our after-school support program for students from first grade to high school. The S.M.A.R.T. program provides small group after-school tutoring in grades 1 to 6. Our partnership with The Princeton Review continues to generate new and exciting programs for students as well, including SMART courses in a wide variety of topics. Information about all of The Princeton Review courses is mailed home to parents and also appears on our WEB site ([www.cheltenham.org](http://www.cheltenham.org)). In addition, I love to talk to parents about these opportunities. Please feel free to call me at 215-881-6463 or email me at [aspector@cheltenham.org](mailto:aspector@cheltenham.org).

The Constitution Scholars Program at Cheltenham High School is an exciting initiative that we would like to see grow. More than 20

students from grades 10 to 12 are working in partnership with the National Constitution Center to develop a deeper understanding of aspects of the Constitution.

One of my personal goals in sharing this information is not only to inform our parents but also to seek their help. We are always looking for lawyers to guide our Constitution Scholars, engineers to support our Robotics programs at EP, Cedarbrook and CHS, writers to be a presence at a Writers Workshop we are developing for the spring, and many more. Our parents are our best supporters. Sharing your talents and expertise will only make our programs better.

I would be remiss as I write about the highlights of the fall if I did not mention our thriving Cheltenham Parenting Center and their outreach programs. If you know of a family who is new to the district who might like a "buddy" to help them navigate these new waters, contact Judy Parish, the Director of the Cheltenham Parenting Center, at 215-663-6411.

The Office of the Director of Gifted and Support Services is a happening place. Your ideas and feedback are an important component in making things happen. I welcome your ideas and look forward to continuing to watch us grow.

## We Want to Know ...

*"Gotta Beef," a concern, or just need a clarification about a school related topic? Let us know and we'll get back to you with what we can find out about your issue. You can E. Mail us directly at [UPG@Cheltenham.org](mailto:UPG@Cheltenham.org) or you can mail the note below to: UPG, Administration Building, 1000 Ashbourne Rd., Elkins Park, PA 19027.*