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# The United Parents Group



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**2003-04**

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**Contact us at**  
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## **Portrait of a Student: The Personal Educational Profile**

In September, the school district unveiled a new initiative, which encourages parents of pupils in grades K-6 to paint a picture of their children, not with colored pencil or watercolor, but by answering a few questions meant to tease out who each student really is. Students also answered a few questions about themselves and their goals for the year. The new program is called the “Personalized Education Profile, “PEP,” and by September of next year every child in our district will start school with this very special depiction as part of his or her file.

All youngsters have special talents and emphasizing their positive traits enhances each student’s school experience. Teachers pinpoint elements that enrich students’ involvement in the life of the schools using the information parents outline in the PEP. Thus, a teacher can use a child’s strengths or

interests as a resource for motivating or encouraging the child.

From the first week of school, the educator is filled in about the student’s likes, strengths, motivation, and learning styles. The teacher also shares the information with the student’s “specials” teachers (art, music, etc.). The idea is to sensitize the staff to a clearer understanding of each student by “personalizing” the educational experience. No longer might half a school year go by before a teacher figures out how a student is best motivated.

Knowledgeable about each child’s unique interests and emotional make-up, the educator inspires the pupil to become an active participant in the learning process. When teachers value each student as an individual, the message is student-centered: How one teaches becomes as important as what one teaches.

## **Parents Contribute to School Drug / Alcohol Policy**

Should a student who has been suspended from school be allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities once he or she returns to school? Should the district’s response to a student’s drunkenness at a school dance include expulsion, community service, or enrollment in an education program--or a combination?

By the time this UPG Newsletter is delivered to parents, Cheltenham’s school board will have deliberated for several months about changing the district’s current drug and alcohol policy. The policy affects only a handful of students each year; however, the discussion is important to them, and it has helped to clarify the board’s thinking on other related policies. The school board’s decision on this one policy illustrates how all of our school district’s

policies are created, and parents’ comments are welcome throughout the process.

Whenever the board makes any decision, it is first discussed at a meeting of one of the board’s standing committees, including education, business, and policy. These meetings are open to the public, and dates, times, and locations for all of these meetings, as well as the text of all of the district’s policies, are available at [www.cheltenham.org](http://www.cheltenham.org) under “School Board.” The almost-weekly committee meetings allow for intense, focused discussions before the board’s decisions are presented for a formal vote at the televised Legislative Affairs meeting. The board, for instance, welcomed public comments on Policy #227, “Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Intervention,”

**See Page 2: Drug / Alcohol Policy**

# 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)>

## Drug /Alcohol Policy continued...

at six policy committee meetings since November, and they have scheduled two more policy meetings for March 23 at 7 pm and for March 30 at 7:30 pm, both at the Administration Building, room 119. The revised policy is tentatively scheduled to be presented as a "First Read" at the Legislative Affairs meeting on April 13, when the public will again be invited to comment. If the board accepts the wording, the policy will then

return to committee, where the community can once again voice their opinions. Finally, if there are no substantive changes, the policy will be voted upon, after public comment, as a "Second Read" at the May 11 Legislative meeting. It's not too late for more parents to enter the conversation on this important issue or on other issues throughout the year.

**Everyone is welcome as UPG hosts PA's Secretary of Education, Dr. Vicki L. Phillips: Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup> @ 7:15 pm, Cheltenham High School's Little Theatre. Contact UPG for information about parking, free babysitting, or other details.**

## From the Desk of...

### The Assistant Superintendent

*Each issue of the UPG Newsletter will feature a message from the office of a school district administrator. This month we feature Dr. Susan Beerman.*

It hardly seems possible that a year has passed since I came to Cheltenham! Perhaps the old adage is true: "Time flies when you're having fun." Of course, for that to be true, one must consider hard, productive, work to be fun!

The Cheltenham community is, indeed, unique. We are fortunate to have gifted, sensitive educators working in tandem with well-informed, loving parents to make great things happen for children and young adults. Our families represent all walks of life, and the diversity we enjoy enriches all of our lives. Cheltenham graduates continually excel in their chosen fields.

District educators are embarking upon a major endeavor to insure that all curricula is written and taught to standards. When we have aligned the curriculum and developed assessments specifically designed to assess students' attainment of standards and deep understanding of concepts, we anticipate seeing an improved degree of consistency among classrooms. As part of the alignment process, our teachers are ensuring that every standard is taught and assessed throughout a child's educational journey in grades K-12. Our goal is to insure that all students have the same educational opportunities and that they meet standards as they progress through the grades. Students who are falling behind will be identified early and provided with appropriate interventions.

For students to be successful in school, students, parents, and teachers must share the responsibility. Students need to come to school regularly and do their best to learn what is expected of them; parents need to provide the support and encouragement students need to be successful; and teachers need to provide instruction that ensures their students' attainment of knowledge, skills, and understandings. I like to use the analogy of a three-legged stool, with each leg representing students, parents, and teachers. If all three legs are equally supporting the seat, the stool is sturdy. If, however, any one of the legs is shorter than the others, the stool becomes wobbly. As we work towards improved accountability, we need to remember to strengthen the partnership we have with our families.

### UPG Meetings Administration Bldg.

Wednesday, March 17  
@ 9:15 AM

Monday, April 19  
@ 7:15 PM

Wednesday, May 19  
@ 9:15 AM

## 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 to: UPG, Administration Building, 1000 Ashbourne Rd., Elkins Park, PA.