



MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Welcome to the 2015-16 school year! We're excited that school is back in session, with many opportunities to see great things happening for our students! Seventh grade orientation and Back-to-School Night were wonderful. I want to thank students, parents and staff, for all of their help and support to make these events a big success. We also had a great experience with online enrollment again this year, thanks to you, our parents!

WANTED

Parent Help with Accreditation!

Periodically schools go through a process called accreditation. Every school that awards graduation credit to students is required to be accredited. The accreditation process helps a school to identify strengths and weaknesses and create a plan for improvement.

West Hills is going through the process of renewing our accreditation this year. Part of this process is a parent survey, **and if we do not get enough responses to our survey, we risk not passing this portion of the accreditation process.**

We need **all our parents** to log on and complete a short, web-based survey **before the end of October**. Your help is very important, and every survey counts.

TWO WAYS TO FIND THE SURVEY:

#1

Visit the link below:

<http://www.advanced.org/survey/public/9509747>

#2

Click the "Accreditation Survey" link under the "Parents" tab on our school website:

Sincerely,

Stacy Evans,
Principal



MESSAGE FROM THE PTSA PRESIDENT

West Hills Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) **Opportunities**

Welcome to another great school year at West Hills! We are honored to serve you in PTSA, striving to support our outstanding students, faculty, staff and community. We've enjoyed meeting new administrators and teachers during summer break and back-to-school night. The goal of our organization is to work together with school employees to provide the best environment possible for the safety, health, academic and extra-curricular success of all students. To achieve this, please consider participating in the following areas as much as possible. We want everyone to feel welcomed and encouraged to participate for the benefit of our great community. Please contact me any time with questions, comments or offers to help at david@octappella.com. Thank you, and best wishes for a great school year!

Sincerely, David F. Pack, Ph.D., West Hills PTSA President

- **Membership**

\$6 for each person--both spouses, students, grandparents and other adult family members are encouraged to join. *Students must be a member to receive free dance admission, participate in our musical, be a student representative or work on memory book staff.* PTSA is the largest organized child / education advocacy group. Dues help safeguard educational-friendly and family-friendly legislation and initiatives. Without strong lobbying efforts with legislators, education funding easily diminishes. Being a vocal majority better ensures our voice is heard amid other voices that would seek to divert educational funding for their own special interest. Being a member does not obligate you to volunteer, and you won't receive unsolicited contacts. If you support education, this is the least expensive and efficient way to demonstrate your support! Membership envelopes are available at the front desk and / or contact any PTSA board member for more information.

- **Fundraiser**

Memory books / yearbooks are our only fundraiser for the entire school year, with 100 percent of the net proceeds after all publication costs going toward supporting our school with programs such as the annual student musical, teacher classroom grants for needed materials not funded by the district, teacher dinners, dances,



student representatives and many other activities to support our awesome students, teachers and staff. Your student is guaranteed to receive a copy--and they are less expensive--when ordered in advance.

- **Donations**

In lieu of / in addition to supporting our fundraiser, if you prefer to donate so that 100 percent of gross proceeds are retained, a suggested donation is the equivalent of one memory book order, which is \$25. PTSA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and your donation may be tax deductible; consult your tax professional. Please contact your friends, family, coworkers and employers—you may have an employer donation match opportunity. All PTSA staff are pro bono volunteers; therefore, 100 percent of funds raised go toward our school. The budget has been discussed and set in open transparency with PTSA executive board, school administration and teachers to ensure funds are allocated in amounts and areas having the most significant impact for our students.

- **Open Meetings**

We encourage everyone to attend our public meetings to ensure transparency, communication and representation from all segments of our community. We welcome new people and new ideas! Meetings are generally held the first monthly Tuesday from 9:00-10:30am. If you can't attend the meetings, no problem—we welcome your input. Please contact the main office and / or any PTSA board member with your comments.

- **Volunteering**

Calling all women and men! Your time and talents are not only desired, but also needed! You can tailor-make your own involvement without fear of being hounded for anything else other than what you want to do. Serve where, when and how you wish. There are daytime and nighttime opportunities, at-home or at-school projects, one day per month or one week per year schedules. Our goal is to have much committee work since many people working in synergy lightens work-load, increases success and enjoyment. We have pared down volunteer areas considerably, focusing on the core areas of reported impact significance to ensure your time and effort are well invested. Among many other statistics, it is empirically proven through many studies that PTSA membership and involvement at school significantly raises your child's / children's test scores and diminishes instances of substance abuse and truancy. Please volunteer! Thank you.





SCHOOL MUSICAL

The school musical this year is going to be **PIRATES OF PENZANCE**. The Reveal was held on September 11 and was a huge success. The musical will be in steampunk fashion. Any student of West Hills Middle School with a 2.0 GPA who is passing all of his/her classes can be in the play. Students are encouraged to join PTSA but not required. The PTSA is responsible for the musical every year.



The address for the musical website

is: www.westhillsmusical.WordPress.com. New content will be up on October 1st. Kids and parents will be able to learn more about the songs, the idea of steampunk, and what to do to prepare for auditions.

A meeting with the students and parents will be held on November 4th to talk about the process of being in the play, and to address questions before they sign up to audition.

STUDENT REPS



Student reps are doing a contest for the three best TA Halloween decorated doors. Judging will be done after school on Thursday October 29th. The top three decorated doors will win donuts for the whole TA class. Any questions can be directed to Lori Ingham at whmsstudentreps@hotmail.com.



CHOIR

The Choir Concert will be held on October 22 at 6:30.

Show Choir will begin rehearsals for the Christmas Concert on Mon. Oct. 26th. They are held from 3:00 – 4:00 on Monday thru Thursday. If your child is still interested in Show Choir and wasn't able to join us for 1st quarter, they are more than welcome to join on that date. Show Choir combines dancing and singing and is a lot of fun.

On November 5th, selected students from Concert Choir will be participate in Solo and Small Ensemble. Parents are welcome to attend this event.



REFLECTIONS

It is time for Reflections again. The theme this year is, "Let your imagination fly!" Information and forms are available in the Main Office. ALL entries are due by the end of school on Friday, October 9th.

HUGE CONGRATULATIONS goes out to Katie Wesley who's video went on to compete at the national level last year!

We are also looking for judges who are willing to come assist us with the judging process. If you are interested please contact Aubrey Savas via email, text or phone call. Her information is spbyaubrey@gmail.com and her number is 801-694-6019.

We look forward to seeing all the incredible ideas that your students come up with.





Pay Attention to Attendance: Keep Your Child On Track in Middle and High School

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and on the job.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Students should miss no more than 9 days of school each year to stay engaged, successful and on track to graduation.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.
- Missing 10 percent, or about 18 days, of the school year can drastically affect a student's academic success.
- Students can be chronically absent even if they only miss a day or two every few weeks.
- Attendance is an important life skill that will help your child graduate from college and keep a job.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make school attendance a priority

- Talk about the importance of showing up to school everyday, make that the expectation.
- Help your child maintain daily routines, such as finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Try not to schedule dental and medical appointments during the school day.
- Don't let your child stay home unless truly sick. Complaints of headaches or stomach aches may be signs of anxiety.

Help your teen stay engaged

- Find out if your child feels engaged by his classes and feels safe from bullies and other threats. Make sure he/she is not missing class because of behavioral issues and school discipline policies. If any of these are problems, work with your school.
- Stay on top of academic progress and seek help from teachers or tutors if necessary. Make sure teachers know how to contact you.
- Stay on top of your child's social contacts. Peer pressure can lead to skipping school, while students without many friends can feel isolated.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

Communicate with the school

- Know the school's attendance policy – incentives and penalties
- Talk to teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Check on your child's attendance to be sure absences are not piling up.
- Ask for help from school officials, afterschool programs, other parents or community agencies if you're having trouble getting your child to school.





Help Your School and Community Improve School Attendance:

PUSH FOR BETTER TRACKING OF CHRONIC ABSENCE DATA

Every report card includes a box showing parents just how many absences their children have. But does your school look at absenteeism numbers for the whole student body? And can the principal tell you how many students are missing so much school that it interferes with their academic performance? Keep in mind, too much absenteeism isn't just a problem for the students missing school but can disrupt learning for the whole classroom.

All parents should know this sort of information about their children's school. But many schools and districts don't track or release what's known as chronic absence data – the percent of students missing 10% or 18 days over an entire school year. They look at the average number of students who show up for school, rather than at the number who are missing too much school due to any kind of absence, excused or unexcused. Average figures can mask large numbers of chronically absent, at-risk students.

Parents can make a difference!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

In Your Community

- **Get the data:** Ask your school and district to calculate chronic absence rates and share them with parents, teachers and principals.
- **Identify barriers to attendance:** Work with your school to find out from parents and students what prevents them from getting to school.
- **Make a plan:** Encourage your school to make a plan and partner with community agencies to address identified attendance barriers.
- **Create incentives:** Help your school recognize students and families for good and improved attendance. Assist with award ceremonies and certificates or even reach out to local businesses to contribute incentives like gift cards or food items.
- **Educate parents:** Help all parents in your school understand the importance of attendance and who to call for the health, transportation or social services resources they need.



In Your State

- **Encourage tracking:** State regulations or laws should ensure that more school districts track chronic absence data and report it to the state.
- **Urge better reporting:** Your state education department should release chronic absence data statewide, just like they release test scores for districts and schools.
- **Advocate for accountability:** Your state department of education and districts should hold schools accountable for addressing chronic absence in their school improvement plans.

