

Northwestern High School

School Improvement Plan

2006-2007

Jerome Thomas, Principal

Phone: 301-985-1820

Fax: 301-985-1833

Mission

The mission of Prince George's County Public Schools is to ensure that all students acquire information and skills and the ability to apply their knowledge to become lifelong learners and productive citizens in a diverse/global society.

This mission is best accomplished through a structure of child-centered learning communities characterized by: equity and access to a quality education that includes strong instructional leadership; high expectations for the achievement of all students; a rigorous curriculum; frequent monitoring of student performance; extending learning opportunities for students failing to meet academic standards; well trained, certified teachers in all classrooms; enhanced resources; families who are empowered to assist in providing a quality education for every child; a school climate conducive to building positive relationships; a safe and orderly school environment fostering enhanced school pride.

Prince George's County Public Schools

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Introduction

Northwestern High School is a comprehensive high school located in Hyattsville, Maryland, inside the Washington Beltway and only a few miles from the nation's capital. Students may choose among ten Career Academies in the Schools of Public Service, Health and BioSciences, Business and Finance, Sales and Marketing, Pre-Engineering, and the Jim Henson School of Arts Media, and Communications. More than fifteen Advanced Placement courses are offered for college credit. The **vision** of Northwestern is that all of its students will attain a desire for knowledge and the skills to acquire that knowledge in order to become life-long learners and productive citizens in society. The school day is structured as a four period day with an A-day B-day rotation by county mandate, despite the overwhelming objections of the faculty who must each service close to two hundred students at a time. Northwestern is completing its Year 2 of School Improvement and will be heading for Corrective Action. Parents and the community have been informed of the status through letters home, PTSA meetings, announcements on the radio, television and the outside message board, newspaper articles in the *Washington Post* and the *Prince George's Journal*, the school website, and fliers available in the school's main office.

Northwestern would like to recognize the accomplishments of the various departments:

Art

The Art department has its own gallery to showcase student projects in painting, drawing, ceramics, and computer graphics with revolving exhibits. Each year the students display their work in the Spring Art Show at the Hyattsville Municipal Center. Students may take courses leading up to AP Art History, 2d or 3d Design, and Computer Graphics. The National Arts Honor Society is an active group which completed a large mural outside the cafeteria, created signs for the student restrooms, and worked on other areas for school improvement through beautification. Four guest artists lectured and demonstrated to interested students. Senior students have been accepted at various prestigious schools across the nation including, Art Institute of Washington, Corcoran, Cornell, NYU, NYT, USC and UMD to name a few.

Business

In business education classrooms, students learn the basics of personal finance, develop techniques for making wise consumer decisions, master economic principals, and learn how businesses operate. In addition, business education courses provide the motivation for students to successfully complete college programs in several business areas. The Business Education Department offers a variety of classes to prepare students for the ever-changing global economy. The department offers two specialized programs for students interested in the business field which are the National Academy of Finance, Cooperative Career Education and Cooperative Office Education programs. Students taking business classes are also involved in several activities that include job shadowing, career fairs, and paid internships.

The department is in the developmental stage of building its student organization called Future Business Leaders of America. The FBLA mission is to bring business and education together in a positive working relationship through innovative leadership and career development programs. The purpose of Future Business Leaders of America is to provide, as an integral part of the instructional program, additional opportunities for secondary students in business and/or business related fields to develop vocational and career supportive competencies and to promote civic and personal responsibilities.

English

The English department not only teaches every student in the school, some students take two English courses which resulted in the English teachers instructing over 3,300 students during the 2005-2006 school year. The 9th and 10th graders showed improvement according to Benchmark scores for HSA. Students may take AP Language in the 11th grade and AP Literature in the 12th. Students won both 1st and 2nd place honors in the Hyattsville Black History Month essay contest. Drama students wrote, produced, and performed their own play. Students were encouraged to take advantage of the after school Extended Learning Opportunity program for the second year. For the third year students who failed English 9 were able to attend a credit recovery program, and get back on track during Sunrise School.

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ESOL

The ESOL department was created to help limited English proficiency students compete academically with their English speaking peers. The students are enrolled in support classes in the four core areas but attend all other classes with mainstream students. There are approximately 380 students from over 32 countries in the ESOL department this year. Northwestern is fortunate to have a bilingual Intervention Specialist, who works with students in crisis, as well as a bilingual Instructional Specialist, who assists ESOL and non-ESOL teachers in the classroom. The bilingual Parent/Teacher Liaison, who had worked at NHS for 10 years, was re-assigned as part of a countywide initiative, which has left a huge gap in services this year. Achieving AYP is a goal for the department and several changes over the past year will hopefully increase this possibility. The changes included hiring an additional math teacher, scheduling Biology to be taken when a student is in Transitional (the last ESOL level) or after exiting the ESOL program, and requiring students to take English 10 after completing Transitional (or be concurrently enrolled) in order to give the students additional time to perfect their English skills. Students are also encouraged to participate in the ESOL Homework Club after school and take part in any county sponsored HSA programs such as Twilight School.

Family and Consumer Science

The department offers tech prep credits and is part of a completer program through Child Development and Foods and Nutrition. Guest chefs lectured and demonstrated aspects of the hospitality and tourism industry. Interior Design students were chosen to decorate the bathroom in the student-built home this year. Some students are going on to postsecondary programs at the Culinary Institute of America, Johnson and Wales University, and the US Marine Corps.

Foreign Language

Students may study Spanish, French, German, Italian, or Japanese. The majority of the students are taught by native speakers or those who are highly qualified. Students in AP courses often score above a '3', in fact the school has had the highest percentage of passing scores in the state on the AP Spanish exam for several years. Although there is no AP Japanese exam, several Northwestern graduates have passed directly into year 2 of Japanese at college. After school activities include tutoring, Interact and Anime Clubs, and a spring trip to Japan. In the summer of 2006 a Spanish teacher, the Instructional Coordinator and two students from Northwestern will travel to Paraguay for two weeks to represent the county in a multi-jurisdictional service-learning project with several urban and rural schools.

Health

This year teachers and students focused on AIDS awareness in conjunction with our Wellness Center and representatives from across the state. More than 100 students took advantage of free HIV testing one day in December, and more than 100 more signed up for later testing. For the third year in a row, Northwestern hosted a portion of the AIDS Memorial Quilt; this year we were able to have two sections of the quilt and students completed their own quilt. In the classroom, students can earn the American Heart Association certification in CPR /First Aid/AED. The School Resource Officer provides first hand experience of the consequences of drinking and driving and drug use. By using "drunk goggles" the students are able to experience first hand the negative effects of drinking and driving.

Library Media Center

The library media staff provides instruction in responsible use of information, including website evaluation, citing sources and avoiding plagiarism. The library media staff also serves as information specialists for the faculty, disseminating information for curricular and professional needs. The media center contains 15,278 items, falling short of the state standard of 18,000 for a school our size. Overall the average copyright date is 1984. 60% of the material in science and technology is from 1995 or later. Daily at least four classes and 184 independent students visit the media center. Before and after school an average of sixty students use the facilities in the center including the 30 computers with internet access and printing capabilities. With only two half-time media specialists and one aide, the number of staff falls short of state standards.

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Mathematics

The Math Department provides instruction to almost every student in the school, with some students taking multiple classes concurrently. During the 2005 – 2006 school year, as a system wide initiative, the Math Department introduced Algebraic Concepts, a course that seeks to provide additional instruction for 9th grade students who are not academically prepared to succeed in Algebra 1 and pass the Algebra 1 High School Assessment. With classes ranging from Algebraic Concepts to Advanced Placement Calculus (including an introductory course in Computer Science), the Math Department is able to offer a course for all students of all academic levels. This year's incoming 9th grade class is the first class required to pass the Algebra High School Assessment. Results from quarterly benchmark assessments and department-wide chapter tests demonstrated student improvement in various sub groups throughout the school year. Students needing to recover a credit (in Algebra) or requiring additional academic support are encouraged to enroll in extended learning opportunities provided before school, after school and on Saturdays.

Music

Northwestern boasts a Concert Choir, a Gospel Choir, an Orchestra, a Concert Band, a Marching Band and a Percussion Ensemble with a Steel Drum Band. Students not scheduled in classes during the day may participate in the after school practices and performances. Twenty-four graduating seniors earned over \$220,000 in scholarships. Twelve vocal and twelve instrumental students auditioned and won places in the Prince George's County Honor Chorus and Band. Both Northwestern musical groups have won excellent ratings at county adjudications; the chorus received a Superior rating at the state competition. The Marching Band ranked 16th in the entire nation for Class AA bands. At the Williamsburg Festival, Northwestern won best Music Department as well as having the Instrumental and Vocal Grand Champions.

NJROTC

The Naval Science cadets have earned the honor of being a national "Distinguished Unit" "with Academic Honors," for the fifth consecutive year. More than half the cadets maintain honor roll status and several are in the National Honor Society. Several cadets have been extended military Preparatory School training for service academies and several are awaiting direct admission to a service academy. Extensive extra-curricular activities include stays at Leadership Academy, Boys State and Girls State programs, hosting Basic Leadership Training Camp, ship training cruises, visits to naval and other military installations, museums and historical sites. The cadets have hosted Area FIVE Sanctioned Drill Competition and participated in more than ten field, drill and academic competitions and earned more than 3,000 community service hours.

Physical Education

Students are required to take at least one-half credit of Physical Education to graduate and may choose among Life Sports, Team Sports, Personal Fitness and Strength Training classes. Each class is designed to teach different sports, how to get and stay in shape, or how to lift weights properly. PE teachers usually accommodate class sizes of over forty students.

Science

The Science Department is staffed by highly qualified teachers. In addition to the core curriculum (Biology, Conceptual Physics, and Chemistry) we offer a variety of courses including AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Physics, Microbiology, Human Physiology, Forensics, and Environmental Science. Forty-nine percent of our students passed the Biology High School Assessments. While recognizing the necessity of having every student pass, last year's results represented a significant improvement on the previous year's assessments (49% compared to 32%). The department also held a Science Fair, sent students on numerous field trips, and hosted a lab bus from the TIGR institute—giving our students access to cutting edge biotechnology.

Social Studies

AP courses are offered in Psychology, Government, US History, and World history. Our Mock Trial team won the county championship and placed 3rd in the region. Northwestern hosted History Day. HSA Government students took

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advantage of the Extended Learning Opportunity after school. Students in the International Studies Program visited Senegal, West Africa this spring. The International Studies Program (ISP) at Northwestern High School is an interdisciplinary program, which affords students the opportunity to choose a curriculum offering a focus in global education and technology. Foreign travel is not currently commonplace for a majority of students at Northwestern High School. This component of the ISP greatly enhances participating students' understanding of their world and enriches their ability to interact successfully with a broad range of peoples and regions. The 2007 spring trip will be to Costa Rica.

Special Education

The Northwestern High School Special Education Department provides service to approximately 240 students with 12 of the 14 identified disabilities. Our aim is to promote collaboration among parents, students, educators, and the community to ensure that all children with disabilities are provided with a free appropriate public education. The staff works within the general education curriculum to develop programs that will help the students to accomplish successful transition to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, independent living, and community participation.

Technology Education

Project Lead the Way, a pre-engineering program in its second year at Northwestern will receive its national certification toward the end of the school year. The program has an Advisory council consisting of a variety of professionals in industry and in higher education that advise our teachers and students about extended learning and employment opportunities. Course offerings will expand next year to a total of four introductory and advanced courses. Students create three-dimensional computer models and actual projects. Tech Foundations students were involved in as many hands-on projects as limited resources could provide.

TV Production

Students produce the Morning News Show on Wildcat TV which is transmitted into every classroom that has a drop. We are the only school in the county whose students start with Pinnacle editing software and work up to AVID, the current industry standard in film production. At a yearly film festival students exhibit their work. Northwestern students were the first in the county to put their work on DVDs. The students produce a video yearbook which is part of the senior package. This year a Television Wall of Fame honored graduates who have begun to make their marks in the industry while attending such prestigious schools as the University of Long Island, University of Southern California, and UNC Wilmington. Three different graduates have started their own film-related business.

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School Demographics

3,261 students attended Northwestern during the 2005-2006 school year. 663 entered since mid-July of 2005 and 842 transferred or withdrew during the year. Obviously 45% mobility has an impact on instruction and learning. Of the 2,400 students remaining on May 31, 2006, 56% are African American (some in this category are actually from African or Caribbean nations); 37% are Hispanic; 4% are White and 3% are Asian. 1195 are males and 1205 are females. About 380 students are ESOL or LEP and over 300 are in Special Education. More than 60% qualify for FARM status.

The teaching/administrative staff is comprised of 165 members: 148 classroom teachers, one principal, six assistant principals, six guidance counselors, a Media Specialist, a Technology Coordinator, an Instructional Coordinator, a Collaborative project coordinator, and a Peer Mediator. Of the teaching staff, 67 are Highly Qualified, 80 have APCs, 43 have SPCs, 17 are conditionally certified, one is Provisional, one is a Resident teacher, one holds ROTC certification, and five are working per diem. Eight staff members have begun the work for National Certification. A third of the staff is male, 51% is African American, 40% White, 6% Hispanic and 3% Asian. The security team consists of a Community Resource Officer, who is assigned to Northwestern full time, two investigative counselors, four security assistants and a probation officer. Support staff includes 12 secretaries, 21 custodians, 19 cafeteria workers, 10 day care workers, and 10 paraprofessionals mainly used for Special Education students.

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The school receives community support through parental involvement in the PTSA, participation in Back-to-School night and Freshman Orientation and on parent conference days. Parents also showed interest by attending a Saturday meeting on April 22, 2006 to explain HSA, MSA and AYP. Volunteers stuff envelopes, chaperone field trips, and participate on various committees and academy advisory boards. Business and community partnerships include such programs as MentorCares™ which matches an adult coach with an upper- and a lower- classman, and businesses which offer internships or paid work experiences through the Career Academies and the Work Study Program. Other partnerships involve field trips and hosting meetings such as those with Lockheed Martin, University of Maryland CP, Prince George's Community College, Capitol College and Fannie Mae and the Street Law program which attempts to increase minority interest and involvement in law degrees and professions.

Major initiatives and how these efforts will improve student performance

The priority needs of Northwestern High School center around the core curricula of English, math, science, and social studies. We are judged by assessments in these areas. At the basis of all are reading and math, as all other skills need a foundation in those two areas. The SRI scores for 497 incoming 9th graders in 2005 revealed that 31.6% were reading below grade level, 39.6% were reading on grade level, and 28.8% were reading above grade level. The follow-up 4th Quarter SRI summary for the 9th grade reported 529 test-takers who scored 35.6% below grade level, 38.4% on grade level, and 26.1% above grade level. **Benchmark** achievement data shows that students in 9th grade English have steadily improved to a 52% pass rate while the 10th graders improved to a 49% pass rate. The average performance for those tested on the Quarter 3 H.S.A. Algebra Benchmark is 54%. Individual class data shows 57% (13 of 23) of the class averages are either passing or within 10 percentage points of passing. Individual student data shows approximately 45% (an increase of 12% from Quarter 2) of those tested earned passing scores. Third quarter government scores reflected Honors students passing at 66.9%, Comprehensive students at 53.8%, SPED at 45%, and ESOL at 48%. In science the average score on the 1st quarter benchmark was 46%. 80% scored at the "Basic" level, 17% at "proficient", and 3% at "advanced". The average for special ed. was 28%. ESOL students averaged 37%. Results of the May 2006 HSAs indicate improvement for all four assessment areas. Algebra performance moved from 19.5% passing in 2005 to 45.3% passing in 2006; English 10 moved from 42.8% to 49.7% passing; Biology improved from 2005 scores of 33.4% to 48.9% in 2006; and the LSN Government students moved from 35.3% in 2005 to 66.2% passing in May of 2006. The LEP and Special Education groups remain far behind the others and the Hispanic population is also lagging behind and needs interventions.

Major strategies to address identified needs include staff development workshops which have been planned for five days during the 2006-2007 school year, monthly workshops after school, and mini-workshops conducted periodically during daily teacher planning periods to disseminate reading and math strategies for all subject areas, to improve writing, and to infuse technology into instruction. The efforts of the mentor teachers from the county were sorely missed this year. Several new teachers struggled with adjusting to American culture and teaching our challenging student population. In an effort to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, Northwestern has implemented a mentoring program for new teachers. There are 17 veteran teachers participating and all new teachers are encouraged to participate and attend meetings and gatherings in which they ask questions and share concerns and veteran teachers listen and offer suggestions. More professional development sessions on classroom management are planned for next year. The core departments are working to improve student achievement by offering free tutoring after school. The 2006 ELO programs averaged well over 100 students. Class time is doubled for students in Algebra I, English 9 and English 10, allowing classes to meet daily. The core departments will continue to use benchmark data to evaluate student performance and guide instruction, particularly re-teaching. Because we acknowledge that many of our students come to us lacking basic skills, the extra time during school and after school is necessary in our efforts to improve student performance. Keeping class sizes at a manageable 25 per class could also help, but it appears that staffing allocations will not allow such luxury. Emphasis on taking four years of the core subjects has led to an increase in AP enrollment for students in their senior year.

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Subgroups

Reading

In the 2004-2005 school year Northwestern met AYP in Reading for all subgroups except Special Education and Limited English Proficient. However, an analysis of all subgroups according to the 2005-2006 AMO of 45.3% suggest that if the student subgroups perform at last year's levels on the English II MSA, only the white subgroup would meet AMO. English teachers in grades 9 and 10 followed the pacing guides and administered benchmarks that showed the average pass rates at 52% and 49 % respectively overall. The May 2006 Grade 10 MSA showed 49.7% of the students passing, an increase of about 7% over the 2005 scores.

Special Education

This subgroup remains at around 30% passing for the English II on average. According to the Special Education department chair there are several root causes. Student attendance is poor. Efforts will be made to make more parent contacts to improve attendance. Several teachers are teaching out of field and are learning the material just ahead of the students. Professional development for using the pacing guides and classroom strategies, a mentor teacher 'buddy' system, and peer coaching are planned for the Special Educators. Efforts will be made to update IEPs in a timely manner so that accommodations do not kick in for the first time on the day of the MSA or HSA. All these will improve the chances for our special needs students to perform up to their abilities. Students in Special Education made great gains for 2006 on the MSA (Grade 10 Reading), they improved from a 4.4% pass rate in 2005 to a 17.9% pass rate in May of 2006.

LEP

The ESOL students have performed very well on the benchmarks during 2005-2006, averaging pass rates of between 45-50%. Performance such as this on the actual MSA would qualify for meeting AYP this year. The greatest challenge for this group is one over which we have no control. They enter all during the year (with a wide variety of skill and ability levels) and therefore do not receive a full year of instruction. The after school ELO programs have been very beneficial for the ESOL population. Unfortunately the LEP group fell from 15.6% passing in 2005 to only 7.9% passing in May of 2006.

FARM

The FARM subgroup posted a large gain on the 2006 assessment from 37.2% passing in 2005 to 54.5% passing in 2006. Since about 62% of our population is made up of FARM students, this subgroup helped to raise our overall performance.

All other subgroups

Poor attendance has been identified as a priority target for all students in the 2006-2007 school year. The returning attendance secretary will be in place in August and can begin parent contacts at that time. (She was not hired until late November of 2005; she made over 2,000 calls during the six month period once she was on board.) The assistant principals are developing an attendance/tardy policy which should drastically reduce the embarrassing 100,000+ tardies our students accumulated this year.

Math

For the 2004-2005 school year Northwestern did not meet AYP for the subgroups African American, Hispanic, Free/Reduced Meals, or Special Education. The Geometry Assessment was used to determine that information. This year the Algebra test will be used with the AYP goal being a pass rate of 29.8%. Using that target and analyzing the 2005 Algebra HSA, only the Asian subgroup would pass having earned a 38.5%. Algebra students made a phenomenal gain from 19.5% passing in 2005 to 45.3% passing in 2006.

Special Education

The pass rate in algebra for this subgroup in 2005 was 4.9%. The same negative factors which impacted performance on the English II Assessment also affect math. The two most serious are poor student attendance and their lack of foundation skills. The efforts for improvement also mirror strategies used for English/Language Arts,

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namely staff development in using the pacing guides and more hands on practice for students, collaboration with colleagues in the core department, as well as using benchmarks to reteach skills until students achieve mastery. The introduction of the Algebraic Concepts class should also help ensure that students are actually ready for Algebra. The appropriate accommodations and modifications will be in place for each student by the end of the first quarter. In May of 2006 the Special Education students demonstrated a 2% gain from 4.9% passing in 2005 to 6.9% passing in 2006.

LEP

The ESOL students scored an average of 8.3% passing on the Algebra HSA in 2005. For the students who understand the math, the challenge is to understand enough English to complete the word problems and compose BCRs. For others with interrupted schooling, foundation skills are shaky or missing. As with all students, the introduction of Algebraic Concepts will help prepare the students with a year of math before they have to pass the Algebra MSA. The ESOL department will continue to work with the core departments so that their teaching is in line with the curriculum and the pacing guides. On the May test LEP students improved from 8.3% passing in 2005 to 22.6% passing.

FARM

This subgroup improved from 19.3% passing in 2005 to 36.9% passing in 2006.

All other subgroups

Poor attendance is the largest single factor affecting student performance in school and on the assessments. When the gap must be bridged between where students are and where they should be in terms of knowledge and skills, attendance is crucial. Students cannot learn when they are not present to hear and practice. The entire staff will have an orientation before school into the new attendance initiative designed by the assistant principals. Northwestern teachers want the ELO/Focus programs to begin in the fall. Waiting until January to get extra help is too late for most students.

Safe and Orderly Environment

The administrators and security personnel partner with a Hyattsville police officer to ensure a safe and orderly environment here at Northwestern. All students wear ID's and follow an enhanced dress code or 'uniform' policy. Visitors must sign in at the front desk in order to be issued a visitor's pass. Our community resource officer has a network of informants available that allows the security team and the administration to be aware of community issues that may spill into the school, and they are thus often able to take preventive measures. Northwestern has a clearly delineated emergency plan with varying levels of seriousness that has been tested and found effective on several occasions. All students are required to purchase a student agenda book which contains school and county rules and regulations, the student code of conduct, the school calendar, SAT activities, character education information, and space for teachers and parents to communicate. The guidance crisis intervention team was called into action several times this school year. Students have a better chance at success if they feel that they are in a safe and nurturing environment. Finally, the security team was working at a disadvantage this year for two reasons. First, the lead investigator left the system in the fall for a higher paying position, and we had to function short-handed for several months. Second, and most serious, the recording equipment was not working at all, so there was no way to capture perpetrators on tape. The new machines have now been installed.

This year the School Improvement Team did not meet until April. Departments met regularly, but there was little interdepartmental discussion. Climate needs to improve next year, and more regular meetings will help. Four years ago Northwestern aligned itself with High Schools That Work to continue our efforts at school improvement and have support at the state and national levels. Some of the projects begun back then were abandoned, including the homeroom/advisories. This year's site visit from HSTW suggested that they be reinstated. Since 2001 there have been attempts to reorganize the school into smaller learning communities for students and develop the concept of Career Academies. Efforts have been only marginally successful; counselors do not demonstrate buy-in to the academy concept and fail to correctly schedule students. Timely, accurate scheduling is a continuing problem with

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some students going weeks or a month before their schedules are right. Guidance counselors pledge to meet with all students early next year to create or update their 4 + 2 Educational Plans to ensure that each is on the correct path to graduation and beyond.

The school rules are clearly stated in the student agenda books, the staff handbook and on the school website. They conform to COMAR and the Prince George's County guidelines. The teaching staff has been encouraged to submit PS74 discipline referrals online. A review of the data base shows that many of the 1506 posted during the 2005-2006 school year were never addressed by the assistant principals to whom they were assigned. Possibly this is because they did not 'require administrative intervention', according to one administrator. Of the 1845 suspensions for the year, more than half were for uniform violations. Work needs to be done to craft a series of consequences that will cut down on the time the assistant principals have to expend in that area.

Parents are willing to support our efforts; we need to work together to improve and expand our interactions. The parent teacher conferences at the end of March were well-attended, as was the special Saturday brunch to explain the HSA to 9th grade parents. There were over 100 participants at each event.

Parental Involvement

The executive board of the PTSA is enthusiastic about expanding parental involvement at Northwestern for next year. The parents are producing a newsletter and are attempting a web page. Several ideas have been put forward to recruit more members for the PTSA and to increase involvement of those who do join. A special committee will work on ways to keep parents involved in the positive aspects of their children's education.

Community and Business leaders support the school with donations, paid and unpaid internships, job shadowing opportunities, participation in the Career Fair, membership on advisory boards for career academies, sponsorship of travel and other student activities.