

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sound Enhancement in Schools a Legislative Priority for PTA Council
Issue to be Highlight Session at Fall Workshop on Oct. 25

A resolution promoting sound enhancement technology in classrooms, ratified by the Baltimore County PTA Council in October 2006 and the National PTA in June 2007, is a PTA priority during the pre-operating budget planning process for FY2009. The Classroom Auditory Learning Issues resolution has been integrated into National PTA's legislative platform, thus enabling advocacy for integrating sound enhancement in the classroom at the national level. National PTA is supported by nearly 6 million members.

A sound-enhanced classroom consists of a teacher wearing a wireless infrared microphone that transmits to a receiver/amplifier connected to at least four hard wired ceiling mounted speakers. These speakers evenly distribute a teacher's conversational tone around the classroom, giving a surround-sound effect. Considered by many to be a necessary educational tool, sound enhancement systems have been mandated for use in classrooms by school systems in Ohio, Michigan, and Florida. Sound enhancement systems cost \$1,500 to \$1,700 per classroom. This is roughly the same cost as one classroom computer, yet each is utilized more hours per day.

"Children spend up to 75 percent of the day in school, engaged in auditory learning activities. Yet, until recently, educators, parents, politicians, and taxpayers haven't given much consideration to the children's actual ability to hear in the classroom," says Suzanne DeMallie, founder and executive director of The Institute for Enhanced Classroom Hearing. "All children need a quieter environment and a louder signal (the teacher's voice) in order to understand what they are hearing. In fact, all normal hearing children need the teacher's voice to be at least 15

decibels louder than the background noise in the classroom in order to understand what the teacher is saying.”

According to DeMallie, many educators have incorrectly assumed that children can hear the same as adults. However, a child’s auditory capabilities are not fully developed until age fifteen.

“Sound enhancement technology in the classroom can benefit all children and not just those with hearing difficulties,” explains Susan Katz, Baltimore County PTA Council president.

The Baltimore County Public Schools Board of Education has allotted a total of \$900,000 over the past two years (\$400,000 in 2006; \$500,000 in 2007) to provide amplification technology in school classrooms. However, Baltimore County Executive Jim Smith reduced this budget allocation to just \$50,000 during that same period (\$50,000 in 2006; \$0 in 2007). The PTA Council of Baltimore County is returning to the various groups involved in the budget development process to continue to press for increased funding for this important initiative.

Fall Workshop Sessions Announced

Sound enhancement is one of the featured workshops for the PTA Council’s annual premiere training event to be held on October 25, 2007 at New Town High School in Owings Mills. “Education: A T.E.A.M. Effort,” short for “Together Everyone Achieves More,” is designed to give parents and PTA members the tools to access information, evaluate the effectiveness of their children’s schools and advocate for their children. The event is open to **all Baltimore County PTA members, parents and community leaders** to promote advocacy for Baltimore County children.

The event begins at 6:00 p.m. with a reception featuring lite fare and desserts provided by Western School of Technology culinary arts students, as well as exhibits by more than 60 organizations and associations, including various representatives from the Baltimore County Public Schools, Maryland State Department of Education, and Baltimore County government, as well as cultural arts groups, health and safety organizations and PTA Council committees.

Some exhibitors include:

AEMS :Arts Education in Maryland Alliance
Baltimore County Bureau of Substance Abuse

First Robotics
H.E.L.P.S. Coalition (Health Educators Linking Parents with Students)
Junior Achievement of Central Maryland
Kids Helping Hopkins
Port Discovery

Two sessions of workshops follow for elementary, middle and high school parents on school and academic topics during the first session and PTA operations and programs during the second session.

A sampling of the sessions includes:

Advocating for Sound Enhancement – Suzanne DeMallie, executive director, ECH; Susan Katz, president, PTA Council; Mary Jo Neil, president, Maryland PTA

PTA and the Principal – Terri Smith, PTSA president, Perry Hall Middle School; Allen Zink, principal, Perry Hall Middle School; Rhonda Diggins, PTA Council moderator

Safe Schools – BCPS Office of Student Support Services

National Standards for Family-School Partnerships – Sheri DeBoe Johnson, programs director, National PTA

Reauthorization of NCLB – Bob Witherspoon, senior research associate, RMC Research Corporation and past National PTA board member

Partnering to Promote Student Achievement – Nicole Tucker Smith, supervisor, BCPS Parent Support Services; Jean A. Wilson, principal on assignment, BCPS Office of Language Arts

Key Work of School Boards – Kitty Blumsack, director of board development, Maryland Association of Boards of Education

Money Game Road Show – Port Discovery, the Children’s Museum of Baltimore

The cost per person is \$15. Advance registration is preferred at 410-665-4450 or via email at bylaws@bcptacouncil.org.

The Baltimore County PTA Council is a key link between local PTAs and the Maryland and National PTAs. It was organized in 1950 under the authority of the Maryland PTA for the purpose of conference, leadership training and coordination of the efforts of local PTAs within Baltimore County. The PTA Council, which celebrated its 55th anniversary in October 2005, serves more than 42,000 members in 159 local PTAs.

#