

# Feinstein PTSA in nation's top class

Received national  
honor; one of two  
in RI to be named

**KENDRA LEIGH MILLER**

[kmiller@ricentral.com](mailto:kmiller@ricentral.com)

COVENTRY — The National PTA has designated 124 schools across the country, Alan Shawn Feinstein among them, as 2015-2017 National PTA Schools of Excellence.

The National PTA School of Excellence designation honors accomplishments in building strong, effective family-school partnerships, which are proven to make a difference for students and schools, according to a press release.

National PTA launched its excellence program in 2013 to help strengthen family-school partnerships across the country and make measurable progress in the areas of education, health and safety and arts and cultural exploration.

Through the program, PTA partners with its school at the beginning of the school year to examine how families feel the school measures family engagement strategies and how the school can then work together with parents, to address any barriers and open up new ways for families to support students' success.



# Feinstein PTSA in nation's elite

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The middle school was one of only two in the state to be recognized. Waddington Middle School in East Providence was the second.

Jessie Gilbert, president of the Feinstein Middle School PTSA, explained it was a year-long process and then the decision-making process took another three months.

"It was tough waiting to see the results," she said.

Gilbert described the two-part process as consisting of two surveys with more than 100 questions each, asking parents how connected and involved they feel with the school and what their children are learning, including questions such as how welcomed they feel in the school do parents have opportunities to identify improvement in their child's education.

"Once the surveys were submitted and reviewed, a list of deficiencies was created and we started chipping away to make improvements," Gilbert said. "Then, another survey was sent out, with the same questions, to see what had changed. That's one of the main things that they look at on the national level. Our main goal is to form a strong partnership among the PTA, parents and students."

Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School Principal Dr. Arthur Lisi said it's wonderful thing to get recognition for how the PTSA supports the parents.

"It's another opportunity for the kids to be successful," Lisi

Opportunities to be involved in school activities and to know what their children are learning and involved in make Feinstein Middle School's parents well-informed and connected with the school. RIGHT: Parents help with a 2014 school grounds clean-up.

Daily Times file photo



said.

Coventry School Committee Kathy Patenaude is very proud.

"I love that they have this process and are able to be honored," she said. "As a former PTSA member, I believe doing this evaluation is a very good process for schools to look at what they are doing well and what they need to do. They have beat that drum that parent feedback is so important and the more parents are involved, the more they can understand the changes in policies and we can all make sure parents feel welcome and I know they're all very busy people and work hard, but we can offer them different ways to get involved."

Renee Hapskins, president of the Coventry council of PTA, is

responsible for offering leadership and support training for all PTA units in the town of Coventry.

"We are thrilled that Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School is being recognized for their commitment to engaging families in the learning and success of students," she said. "We know that achieving this commendation is a process that involves a series of surveys identifying needs within the community and then finding ways through the PTA support the needs of the families and students."

She credited Gilbert and Lisi for leading this group through the process and find the ways to build the foundation at ASFMS for their families and students.

"I'm so grateful and pleased to know that all of the hard work and dedication to this process paid off and that it will pay dividends for years to come," Hapskins said. "I know the Coventry community spreads the word daily to build relationships and each family in learning and success and hope that another school in town would take an opportunity for commitment to this process and receive a commendation like this."

"More than 40 years of research shows that when families and schools work together, student achievement increases, schools improve and communities grow stronger," said Laura Bay, president of the National PTA.