

Achievement: Eliminating the Gap

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2009

- WHEREAS, PTA believes that parents are children's first teachers and that parent involvement is essential throughout a child's educational experience, and further that every adult has a responsibility to ensure that all children develop to their full potential; and
- WHEREAS, PTA believes that all children and youth have the responsibility and should have the opportunity to develop their abilities to their fullest potential; and
- WHEREAS, Research has shown that greater parental involvement in children's education results in higher levels of student achievement; and
- WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Education describes the achievement gap as "the difference in academic performance between different ethnic groups," and the California Department of Education, defines the gap as "the disparity between the academic performance of white students and other ethnic groups as well as that between English learners and native English speakers, socioeconomically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities as compared with students without disabilities"; and
- WHEREAS, The California Standards Test (CST) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) show a significant and persistent gap in achievement among communities of color, recent immigration, low socioeconomic status, and students with disabilities within California; and
- WHEREAS, The disparity in the current delivery of education to children in California and the United States perpetuates the achievement gap, and the elimination of this gap is critical for the education of all children at all schools to be competitive in the global economy; and
- WHEREAS, The increasing shift in public education to standards-based curriculum and data-driven decision making should provide necessary information to assist parents, schools, administrators, teachers, and the greater community in understanding, developing, promoting, and supporting strategies to eliminate the achievement gap; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, its units, councils, and districts partner with parents and schools in efforts to eliminate the achievement gap; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts collaborate with appropriate community-based, business, and education stakeholders in efforts to eliminate the achievement gap; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts advocate for legislation and public policies that improve academic achievement for all students and eliminate the achievement gap; and be it further

RESOLVED, That among their advocacy efforts, the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts urge legislators and local school districts to address all issues that contribute to the existence of the achievement gap, and avoid focusing exclusively on a standardized testing-based approach in their efforts.

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Background Summary

"It has been proven that parent involvement transcends many of the barriers that contribute to the achievement gap, such as socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, and the parents' level of education." *National PTA Past President, Linda Hodge

There is no more important issue than ensuring that each and every child in the state of California receives a quality public education in K through 12 grades. As citizens of California our highest priority is to ensure that current and future generations of public school students have the ability to, and are prepared to, achieve their goals with a firm foundation in language arts, math, science, and the arts. The purpose of this resolution is to focus the attention, energy, and commitment of California's largest volunteer children's advocacy group on increasing parent involvement at the school level in addressing the achievement gap between white and Asian public school students, and African-American and Latino students.

The achievement gap exists; it is the subject of extensive research, discussion, and policy development. The achievement gap threatens to undermine state efforts to improve our society, our economy, and our environment. The California State PTA is uniquely positioned to raise the issue of increasing involvement of African-American and Latino parents at the school level. A PTA resolution on the achievement gap is integral to promoting proposals and solutions at the school level to address and eliminate the gap.

PTA believes increasing the time and effort that parents spend supporting their children's education is a significant factor that promotes student achievement and aids in eliminating the gap. This resolution will help the California State PTA in its work of guiding parents, teachers, and school administrators in taking specific actions at the school and district level. PTA promotes continuous, lifelong learning that begins in the school and engages the family, society, and the global community.

Efforts to eliminate the achievement gap begin with words yet must end with actions – multiple, collective actions at all levels throughout the state of California. PTA will inform and support all public education stakeholders, including policymakers, in efforts to eliminate the gap. Eliminating the gap at every school so every child can achieve is of critical importance.

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**Advancing Research, Improving Education, Closing the Texas Achievement Gap, by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)*