

What Does It Mean to Be Part of a Community?

Is a community defined by geography? Sometimes. Is there a community when people are associated by like interests? That's closer. But a better definition for community might be "a group of individuals who are *connected*."

It is not a common membership card or even the mutual desire to advocate for children that truly unites PTA members as a community – it is *how* we connect with each other, *how* we support and engage and share with each other. Building upon this idea is so important that PTA has recently updated its National Standards to put even more emphasis on the community – of PTA members, of schools, and of the public at large.

The new National Standards for Family-School Partnerships serve as a guide for how families, schools, and citizen leaders can best form a community that works toward a common goal of student achievement. The first step in creating these stronger communities is ensuring inclusivity. Do your local units have plans in place for how they will reach out to all the families who are not yet involved with their school? Do they have strategies for drawing in civic partners from their neighborhoods and towns? If not, there's no better place to start than with the National Standards.

There's also no better time to begin than right now – with PTA's second half membership drive. This winter we have an excellent opportunity to bring fresh voices and important contributors into our PTAs and schools. Let's make sure we are extending membership invitations to new families transferring at semester break, to champions of education, and to business owners in the area – they are all welcome in our community of advocates.

For over 110 years, PTA has represented a community of people dedicated to the health, education, and well-being of America's children. As inheritors of that great tradition, it's now our job to keep this community strong, and growing.

Jan Harp Domene
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