

Membership ideas and tips

Great ideas and best practices from previous Idea Exchange workshops & The Communicator articles

Membership themes - Having a theme generates interest and enthusiasm

- **PTA - Building Community Unity**
- **PTA - Connected for Kids!**
- **Deal the kids a winning hand, can we deal you in?, Our PTA is ACES “Advocate – Communicate - Educate - Support”** – using a card playing theme
- **Building Connections** – use cell phones, i-pods, computers, even Legos and handshakes.
- **Building Up With PTA** – use bricks and other construction objects as graphics
- **Mission Possible** – spy gadgets, file folders, magnifying glass
- **Ride the Wave of Success OR Catch the Wave** – water or beach theme
- **Fishing for Members** - use fish tank or aquarium as a prize for a winning class
- **PTA - The Passport to Fun!** – travel-related; suitcases, planes, trains
- **Hop on Board the Membership Train/Bus** – each member is added as a passenger
- **Come Join Our Crew** – pirate theme or car races with crew
- **SS Membership OR Keep PTA Afloat OR Sail Away With PTA** – As members join, add another passenger to the boat; use pirate theme
- **Fuel PTA/Don’t Let PTA Programs Run Out of Gas** – eco-friendly incentives
- **Here We Grow OR Branch Out With PTA** – gardens, flowers, trees with leaves for members
- **Don’t Be the Missing Piece ... Join PTA** – puzzle theme
- **Members Are an Essential Piece** – use puzzle pieces
- **Building a Brighter Future** – construction theme featuring tools, etc.
- **Building Community** – use cut-out hands that are joined
- **PTA - Working in Harmony** – use musical notes or a music scale
- **PTA - The Key to Success OR Unlock the Benefits of PTA** – keys
- **Millie the Millipede** – Help make PTA a million voices strong
- **Starzy - Hollywood/Oscar campaign OR Be a STAR with PTA** – Red carpet for members
- **Use school mascot**
- **Membership mascot** – Set a weekly goal and the classroom that meets goal keeps the membership mascot for the week. (One school uses a giant sock monkey).



Tips for promoting membership

- Invite everyone. Students can join any PTA/PTSA, one does not have to be a parent. Encourage sign-up of extended family members.
- Host a PTA table at any/every community and school event with brochures and cards so people can join.
- Use a central theme and maintain it/refer to it throughout the year.

- Display membership campaign graphs or charts for school and/or classrooms in highly visible locations so everyone can see membership increase.
- Tie membership drive to spirit day.
- Have parties for 100 percent participation.
- Sign up extended family members
- Encourage envelopes to be returned, even without money.
- Clarify that joining and volunteering are not the same – “You can support the work of PTA by joining.” and, “There’s no time commitment when you join.”
- Make everyone aware of what is available at school due to PTA's efforts.
- Maintain communication with parents and all members.
- Ensure that information is available in the languages of the community.
- Send home a folder with PTA information.
- Provide information on programs, how funds are used. Emphasize that all members have a vote.
- Empower members to use the PTA board as a voice in community.
- Use students to motivate parents and teachers to join.
- Ask the principal to speak at back-to-school night about what PTA provides for the school and how much PTA is valued.
- Write to local newspapers discussing the importance of PTA membership to the community.
- Have the PTA buy each teacher a membership – so teachers encourages every family to join.
- Tape an inexpensive “Movie”: “A Day Without PTA” to show what PTA does.
- Provide space on membership form for designating where PTA money should go (e.g. technology, field trips).
- Post a banner announcing membership drive.
- Encourage individual classroom goals.
- Place a poster in every classroom – for every membership campaign and to indicate progress
- Provide incentives: tickets to a carnival, ice cream party, movie days.

Keys to successful membership campaigns

- Ask local merchants to donate coupons as incentives.
- Meet with kindergarten parents the first week of school.
- Have PTA volunteers at orientations and on the first day of school to welcome parents and students with maps of the school and a packet of PTA information including an invitation.
- Have a “cry room” for kindergarten parents with coffee and doughnuts.
- “Each One, Reach One” – bring one new person to a PTA meeting.
- Provide a school calendar or directory with each membership.
- Create a laminated bookmark specifying what PTA provides (vs. foundations, if applicable).
- Provide incentives year-round for joining.
- Provide incentive: \$5 membership provides \$5 book fair credit.
- Offer “Volunteer Bucks” to redeem at carnivals or other events (good ideas for joining or volunteering).
- Offer free pancake breakfast with proof of membership.

Involving teachers

- Enlist the support of your principal. A principal's encouragement to join can go a long way.

Membership Commission

- Provide a breakfast for teachers prior to the start of the school year. Use this breakfast as an opportunity to talk to teachers about the value and importance of joining and partnering with your PTA.
- Include PTA materials in information packets given to teachers and staff at the start of each school year. Include information about the Continuing Education grants for teachers, counselors and school nurses.
- Parent Involvement is what PTA does best and it's the law. Remind teachers and staff that partnering with PTA helps them to fulfill the parent involvement mandate of No Child Left Behind.
- Remind teachers and staff that PTA is more than a local fundraising group for their school. It is an advocacy organization focused on student success!
- Print out personal invitations asking teachers and staff to join and include a membership envelope. Remind them that for the cost of a few coffees they can support our national organization more than five million members!
- Award teachers and staff with a party or luncheon when 100% teacher and staff membership is reached.
- "Stars Walk of Fame": Place a very visible star on the door with the teacher's name when they join.
- Provide opportunity drawings for staff who join with donated items, gift cards, prime parking spot for a month, or other incentives.
- Hold membership competitions between departments or between neighboring schools.
- "Show Your Card" benefits: Provide free coffee and pastries for teachers once or twice a month for those who show their membership cards.

Involving students

- Provide membership invitations in the summer registration packets to incoming students from middle/junior high schools.
- Distribute a special survey for students to determine their interests.
- Create a peer-to-peer connection. Invite students from student government or another involvement that students look up to and have them talk to the student body about benefits of PTA.
- Partner with ASB for discounts at the student store or free/discounted admission to dances, etc. PTA/PTSA members can use their membership card as a school discount card.
- Show your PTA card for root beer floats!
- Award "spirit points" for PTA/PTSA membership.
- Offer scholarship opportunities for students.
- Offer discounts for special events or activities to student members.
- Include student performances at your meetings to attract an audience.
- Sponsor a career day, including mock interviews.
- Prepare a resource book for students to inform them of volunteer opportunities.
- Encourage students to fill leadership positions – it looks great on college applications.
- Ask your nominating committee to consider asking students to be officers.
- Ask for student assistance when establishing themes and programs.
- Establish a theme for the entire membership year and create competitions among classes.
- Invite school clubs and organizations to be involved, share ideas and events.
- Involve students in the planning of events, such as Teacher Appreciation Week.
- Encourage student delegates to attend the Annual California State PTA Convention.
- Include PTA/PTSA meetings, student events and activities on school calendars.
- Send birthday cards to students on their 18th birthdays.

Membership Commission

- Include a Voter Registration Card and information on current legislation of interest to youth.
- Have copies of “When You Turn 18” for students, available from the California Bar Association.
- Ask students to join your e-group regarding legislative activity.
- Review your meeting times to determine if a change will encourage more student participation.
- Request that PTA/PTSA information and an invitation to join be included with student health and emergency card information sent home at the beginning of the year.
- Set up a PTA/PTSA table on student registration days with PTA information relevant to youth. Use a storyboard to highlight activities that benefit students.
- Include the signature of the student body president on the invitation to join PTA/PTSA.
- Ask civics teachers to promote the advocacy opportunities in PTA

Involving high school parents

- Offer a “connected message”; use a phone bank or other communication tool to personally encourage parents to join.
- Knock on your neighbors’ doors, introduce yourself, and put a familiar face on the organization.
- Help students with tutoring or other needs.
- Have a theme for each PTA event. For example, bring in college recruiters, financial advisers and planners. Have one college night for parents and one for students.
- Collaborate with your local chamber of commerce to host a job fair.
- Host a presentation on adolescent development.
- Offer workshops or presentations on bullying and Internet safety, which are very relevant topics for high school parents.
- Host a curriculum night. Help parents understand what courses are needed for graduation, which ones give students college credit, and so forth.
- Ask parents what they need from PTA and provide it!

Involving community members and business people

- Write letters to city council, elected officials, school board members encouraging them to join.
- Attend Rotary, Optimist, Kiwanis Club meetings and recruit their members.
- Host a PTA table at any/every community event.
- Partner with the community for service learning opportunities.
- Partner with community groups on events (police for a bike safety event, local library for a read-a-thon, area health organization for a health and safety fair) and ask those you work with to join PTA.
- Write to newspapers discussing the importance of membership to the community.
- Invite school board members and their spouses to join your PTA/PTSA.
- Invite senior citizens to activities (such as school plays) and encourage community partners to supply transportation.
- Invite senior citizens to be readers in classrooms or to be substitute grandparents.
- Distribute PTA/PTSA membership envelopes to district staff, school site councils, and advisory councils or committees.
- Incorporate local community organizations and businesses into your activities/programs.
- Ask local businesses for discount cards to be used as giveaways – to familiarize the school community with their services.
- Provide local businesses with a PTA member banner, a plaque or a window decal to hang in their establishment.

- Invite your elected officials to every PTA/PTSA event; inform the media that they will be there.
- Ask local elected officials to participate in promoting student performances.
- Remind community members that they do not have to be parents to belong to PTA.
- Invite business leaders to sponsor an activity or event.
- Have students visit the senior center to invite residents to a PTA function – or host a PTA function at the senior center.
- Offer free or discounted tickets to seniors for school sporting events and performances.
- Encourage seniors to be actively involved on campus so that they have the opportunity to view students in a positive light.
- Promote tutoring/mentoring programs that involve seniors and students.
- Ask a local theatre to sponsor a family movie night.

Involving those who speak other languages

- Attend an ELL (English Language Learner) Advisory meeting with a translator and explain the role of PTA.
- Hold a multicultural event that involves everyone (diversity week, multi-cultural fair or exposition, speakers on cultural competency, cultural assemblies).
- Have a board liaison position to the ELAC (English Learner Advisory Committee) parent group.
- Have a special education chairman on your board.
- Have a committee for each “group” in your community.
- Provide interpretation for those that need it. Recruit parents to help with language challenges, recruit translators from the community, provide headsets, hold bilingual meetings, etc.
- Keep parents informed and provide information of value.
- Focus on advocacy to interest special education parents.

Benefits a PTA can create on its own



- Hold a raffle of donated goodie baskets for PTA members.
- Provide discounts on yearbooks, family night events, school paraphernalia.
- Create partnerships with local businesses (health and fitness clubs, coffee shops) or family attractions (amusement parks, movie theatres) that benefit all PTA members; or use the donated discounts for drawings for members.
- Provide a school directory to PTA members.
- Host a picnic for a class or school as a prize.
- Ask the principal to perform (or do something “wacky, risky”) for 100 percent participation (dress in school mascot outfit, move their desk to the roof of a building for a day).
- Provide laminated bookmark or refrigerator magnet with school information (such as the absence line for call-ins) or calendar for the year with holidays.