



Tips for effective PTA outreach

It's all about the kids

In all PTA outreach to the media, focus on the fact that the well-being of children and youth is PTA's priority. Emphasize that in all you do and say.

Making contact

Identify media outlets and key reporters who are likely to be responsive. Watch the news and read the newspaper to determine the reporters who cover education, school, youth and family issues. Keep an updated list.

If you're in an urban area, it may have a local news service that does brief reports and distributes them to subscriber news outlets as tips. Los Angeles has Los Angeles City News; San Francisco has Bay City News Service.

You can make yourself useful to the press and get PTA's message out by establishing contact with key reporters. Get contact information from the news outlet's website. E-mail or telephone/voice-mail those key reporters (send a letter if e-mail or telephone contact information isn't available), introducing yourself as a PTA leader who is available for comments on education stories as needed, and providing day and evening contact information.

If your area has blogs, e-discussion groups, websites or online calendars addressing schools, get their contact information and post outreach there.

Press releases

The press release must concisely answer the questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

Be brief, simple, and to the point.

All news releases need to be approved by the president before being sent to the media.

E-mail is the current preferred mode for sending press releases. Send them by cut-and-paste, not attachments.

Avoid jargon and PTA insider language.

Assume that the reader has zero prior knowledge.

Focus on specifics rather than generalities, and relevance or impact on schools and children rather than procedural issues.

Give examples and specifics. Try to choose examples with a connection to newsworthy issues, and that make sense to non-insiders and readers who aren't well-informed about education issues.

Keep paragraphs short.

Always include the name of an informed contact, with all contact information.

At the end: Use a good, thorough, clear description of PTA in every press release. It can be the same one in every press release, such as:

The California State PTA is a branch of the 110-year old National PTA, which has more than 6 million members nationwide. The PTA is the nation's oldest, largest and highest-profile volunteer organization working on behalf of public schools, children and families, with the motto "Every child, one voice." PTA volunteers work in their schools and communities to improve the education, health and welfare of all California children and youth. The PTA also advocates at national, state and local levels for education and family issues. The PTA is non-profit, non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-commercial. For more information, go to www.capta.org.