

PTA[®] in California

everychild. onevoice.

VOLUME 64 • NUMBER 4

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE PTA

FALL/WINTER 2001

PTAs Can Participate in School Bond Measure Campaigns—Here's How

Last year the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts worked hard to pass Proposition 39, a statewide ballot initiative which lowered the vote requirement to pass local school facilities bond measures from two-thirds to 55 percent. This year many school districts throughout the state will place school facilities bond measures on their local ballots under the new voting requirements allowed by Proposition 39. PTAs will be asked to help secure the passage of these bond measures. How can PTAs most effectively participate in local bond measure campaigns?

The California State PTA and all of its constituent organizations are classified under the federal Internal Revenue Code (IRS) Section 501(c)(3) as tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations. To retain this tax-exempt status and continue to receive tax-deductible contributions, PTAs may not:

1. devote more than an “insubstantial part” of their activities and expenditures to influence the outcome of a ballot measure, including a school facilities bond measure. “Insubstantial” generally means five percent or less.
2. participate in any political campaign or activity on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for any public office.

Other restrictions limit what PTAs may do in support of school facilities bond measures. For example, school equipment and resources may not be used to develop, print or distribute campaign materials. There are also limitations on materials and information that may be sent home with students. (See Legislation Policy #11, pages 136-137 in the Advocacy Section of the *California State PTA Toolkit*.)

In addition to IRS regulations, the State of California has established legal proce-



dures and requirements for filing reports on election campaign expenses. PTAs participating in a campaign to pass a school facilities bond measure must file a report with the State of California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) if their total campaign expenditures (including both monetary and in-kind contributions) exceed \$1,000 or more. It is strongly recommended that PTAs carefully account for all expenditures made for any ballot measure purpose and that contributions be limited to in-kind services and volunteer activities.

PTAs can work most effectively to support local school facilities bond measures when they

- take an active role in planning the campaign;
- provide speakers to inform the community about the need for new and modernized school facilities;
- develop and distribute campaign materials, as allowed and regulated by local school district policy; and
- make use of radio, television and print media, including newsletters, editorial board visits, letters to the editor, and other communication resources such as Email and Web pages.

The lowered vote requirement for passage of local school facilities bond measures may result not only in more bond measures on local ballots, but in more opposition to these measures from local tax organizations. PTAs that need assistance or advice on their participation in local school bond measure campaigns should call their PTA district president or the California State PTA Legislative Office at (916) 442-5667 or Email <leginfo@capta.org>.

Legislation Team

This Issue...

Frequently Asked Questions About Arts in Education Research	Page 2
Reflections Arts Enhancement Grants	Page 2
From the President	Page 3
Pledge to Overcome Hate	Page 3
Give the Gift of a Lifetime, Read With Children and Youth . .	Page 4
Rules and Regulations	Page 4
Be Responsive as a Quality Leader	Page 4
Club Drugs	Page 5
Parents, Did You Know?	Page 5
Helping Students Cope With National Tragedy	Page 5
A Dad's Perspective	Page 6
Let PTA Help You to Build Successful Partnerships	Page 6
Characteristics of the 529 College Savings Plan	Page 7
Recent Parent/Student Guides from EdSource	Page 7
Before You Give, Do Your Homework	Page 8
Charity: Check It Out List	Page 8



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) About Arts in Education Research

The following are questions that policy-makers, educators, arts leaders, business leaders, foundation officers, and parents might ask about arts education and arts education research.

A. Arts Education and Academic Achievement

1. *Why is arts education important for students in California public schools?*

- Arts education promotes learning, creativity, skills and knowledge in the visual and performing arts, learning that is valuable in itself.
- Learning in the arts can lead to improved achievement in other academic subjects.
- A complete education, which emphasizes deep understanding of multiple subjects and disciplines, includes a comprehensive education in the arts.
- Creative industries are key to the economy of California and a source of future employment for up to 1 in 5 California students.

2. *What is the relationship between taking arts coursework in high school and SAT scores?*

- Students of the arts in all categories and disciplines outperformed their non-arts peers on the SAT in 2000.
- Some suggest that this link is more a matter of correlation than causation.

3. *Does arts education have an overall effect on achievement in other academic subjects?*

- Student achievement in non-arts subjects is heightened in schools with high quality arts education programs, especially in mathematics and reading.

4. *Can arts education help motivate students to learn?*

- Students involved in the arts have been found to be motivated to learn more than those not involved in the arts, and tend to collaborate more with fellow students in a broad range of learning activities.

5. *Are "critical thinking skills" developed through learning in the arts?*

- Arts activities encourage students to seek multiple interpretations to questions, rather than simple right or wrong answers.

6. *Do the arts have special impacts on economically disadvantaged students?*

- Students with high levels of arts learning outperform "arts-poor" students in other academic subjects. These differences are most pronounced in students from low-income backgrounds.
- Disadvantaged students in after-school arts programs achieve more in school and their personal lives than peers not involved in the arts.

7. *Are the arts important to early childhood development?*

- Active use of the arts lays the groundwork for young children's use of language and their ability to read and write.

- Arts programs in early childhood can lead to increased memory ability, social participation, self-esteem, and early understanding of diverse cultural traditions.

8. *Do specific art forms have special impacts on academic achievement?*

- Drama education can lead to increased skills in oral language, reading, writing, mathematics, critical thinking and decision-making, and constructed learning.
- Dance education can lead to development of visual-spatial skills and improved skills in reading.
- Sustained involvement in music is highly correlated with success in mathematics.

9. *Are there other learning outcomes associated with arts education?*

- Through the arts, students can explore socio-political ideas, develop understanding of other cultures and develop positive social behaviors such as empathy and attitudes against prejudice and racism.

Watch for more information in future issues of *PTA in California*

*Source: An Arts in Education Research Compendium
A publication of the California Art Council,
Year of the Arts 2001
Education Commission*



Mary Lou Anderson Reflections Arts Enhancement Grants

A limited number of matching grants of up to \$1,000 are awarded each year to local PTAs for student-centered programs focused on arts education. Special consideration is given to programs that reach large numbers of students, especially students who are at risk.

The grant program complements National PTA's longstanding commitment to quality arts education in public schools by providing funds to local PTAs to establish or enhance a school arts program in one or more of the following arts areas: visual art, photography, musical composition (including dance), and literature (including theater). Local PTAs must provide funds that match the amount they are requesting.

Mary Lou Anderson Reflections Arts Enhancement Grant applications for 2002 are available from your district PTA president or on-line at www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/familyfun/mla.asp.

Member Services Commission



From the President... Moving Beyond Tolerance to Inclusiveness

The California State PTA is truly committed to providing an inclusive and accepting environment, which requires us to be much more than tolerant. The word tolerance is a far too passive word and does not accurately depict PTA core beliefs. The core value of PTA is to represent all children. We believe ever-changing demographics make it imperative for PTA, at every level, to

- Become more aware of and sensitive to the needs of diverse parent, student, and community populations;
- Focus on fostering individual and intergroup respect, understanding and appreciation;
- Educate its leaders to the needs of the population that the PTA serves;
- Reflect the changing demographics and family structures of PTA boards and within its membership;
- Encourage that all PTA activities at the school be planned by a committee which is representative of the population;
- Become acquainted with the leaders of the many diverse groups in the community and collaborate with them to increase parent, family and community involvement.”*

National PTA’s belief in the democratic ideal was first articulated by our founders who committed the organization to “respect all childhood and homehood, irrespective of color, creed, or condition. That vision has inspired generations of PTA leaders to strive for equality of achievement for all children. Today National PTA remains fully committed to democracy, fairness, and a respect for the individual worth of all people.”**

“Every child must learn to appreciate his or her own uniqueness while learning to respect and value individuals and groups in a diverse society. National PTA believes that the first and most important steps to combat hatred and violence must be made by families and supported by schools who teach tolerance, respect and sensitivity towards others. National PTA believes that the lessons of respect are best learned when parents, teachers, and other adults model a commitment to tolerance and fairness.” ** Further, National PTA opposes discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, language, religion, age, physical and academic ability, and sexual orientation.

Inclusiveness requires all of us to remain proactive in our approaches to human relations. PTAs should work diligently to provide opportunities where all people feel included and safe from prejudice, racism and stereotyping.

PTA leaders must continue to develop and train themselves and members and to be effective communicators. Training should include reinforcing the key elements of positive communication which include:

- Listening without prejudice
- Accepting rather than challenging different points of view
- Understanding that accepting a difference of opinion doesn’t mean you have to agree
- Solutions that value all members’ contributions

Having good, healthy, and yes, different opinions can only make our decisions better. Modeling behavior of tolerance, respect and inclusiveness is an essential step to providing an environment where all children feel accepted and are empowered to reach their full potential.

Let us always remember we are our children’s first teachers; how we view and treat the world with its differences will be transferred to our children. Children aren’t born with prejudice, it is learned behavior. Let’s teach our children to be inclusive and to respect others. The California State PTA values and appreciates diversity, which enriches and strengthens the structure of our society within our state and nation. Join us as we pledge with “one voice” to overcome hate on behalf of “every child.”

Jan Harp Domene, California State PTA president
everychild. onevoice.

*California State PTA position statement: *Inclusiveness and Diversity*

**National PTA position statement: *Respecting Differences*

Pledge to Overcome Hate*

1. I pledge from this day forward to do my best to interrupt prejudice and to stop those who, because of hate, would hurt, harass or violate the civil rights of anyone.
2. I will try at all times to be aware of my own biases against people who are different from myself.
3. I will ask questions about cultures, religions and races that I don’t understand.
4. I will speak out against anyone who mocks, seeks to intimidate or actually hurts someone of a different race, religion, ethnic group or sexual orientation.
5. I will reach out to support those who are targets of harassment.
6. I will think about specific ways to help my children’s schools, other students and my community to promote respect for people and create prejudice free zones.
7. I firmly believe that one person can make a difference and that no person can be an “innocent bystander” when it comes to opposing hate.

*Adapted from the Anti-Defamation League(ADL),
Close the Book on Hate Campaign. <www.adl.org>



Give the Gift of a Lifetime, Read with Children and Youth

From the Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales to Dr. Seuss to Judy Blume reading has the potential to ignite a child's imagination, inspire creativity or serve as a bridge to other positive activities. As we come together with family this holiday season, it is a good time to explore the magic of reading with our children and youth.

Reading is the foundation on which a solid education is built, and the efforts to raise awareness of the importance of literacy are significant. Reading is the skill that makes all other skills possible. Parents are key to supporting the reading and learning effort at home and should make every effort to spend time reading with children and youth. Helping children and youth become readers is an adventure you will not want to miss.

As a parent or caring adult, you can awaken children and youth to the joy of reading by encouraging their imagination

and curiosity. There are many windows to the world, and by encouraging children and youth to embrace literacy, you help them make the most of the world around them. Once children and youth become readers, their world is forever expanded and open for exploration and discovery.

Home is the first and best place for your child's love of reading to grow. During this season of family get-togethers, encourage grandparents, visiting friends and relatives to let children see them enjoying a book, newspaper, or magazine. Modeling is a powerful strategy. Additionally, if friends and relatives are looking for gift ideas for your children, suggest an age appropriate book club or magazine subscription.

There is no more special gift for children and youth than the gift of reading and storytelling.

*Wishing you a safe and enjoyable holiday season,
Shirley Igo, National PTA president*



Rules and Regulations

When you join an association you agree to abide by the rules and regulations that govern that association, whether or not you actually pay dues. The American Medical Association has the Hippocratic Oath and other regulations by which member physicians must abide. The American Bar Association has a code of ethics and numerous rules and regulations that govern the way member attorneys and judges practice law. The Parent-Teacher Association also has established policy and procedures that members agree to follow when they join. The bylaws are your guide to doing business the "PTA way."

The Revised April 2001 unit bylaws state in Article VII, section 1, the exact day (e.g. 2nd Tuesday) your association meetings are to be held. This date cannot be arbitrarily changed. You must hold an association meeting on the specified day. What if your unit prefers to coordinate your holding your association meeting with Back to School Night? Is there a way to alter the meeting date and still follow the rules?

Yes, there is. The section continues, "...notice of any change or time or date of the regularly scheduled meetings must be given in writing to the entire membership at least five (5) days in advance (of the revised date)." Thus your board can issue a notice of meeting change to the membership via a printed flyer sent home with the students. (Always get prior approval of the administrator.) The notice of date or time change can be posted on your school marquee. When the year's calendar of scheduled meetings is adopted, the date change can be promoted. Through these methods you have followed your bylaws and successfully changed your association meeting date.

The PTA bylaws—whether national, state, district, council, or unit—specify practices and procedures which leaders must follow at each level. It is up to you as leaders to ascertain those rules and ensure that your board and members abide by them. Make sure your unit, council, or district has the most recent revision of the appropriate bylaws. Hold a special meeting with your executive board (see Article VIII, section 6, to adhere to the correct procedure) and read through the bylaws. Your board members should all be familiar with the governing documents of your association.

Bylaws Committee



Be Responsive as a Quality Leader

A quality leader is responsive to those they lead. As a PTA leader—at whatever level—you will find (if you haven't already) that members and board members alike will come to you for "help." They may request your assistance with a committee member, solicit your comments or advice on committee business or want you to solve a problem. They may speak to you at a meeting, call you on the telephone, or E-mail you with their concerns. Always think before you speak; carefully consider before you hit "reply."

In an advanced leadership position such as a council or district president, you can expect calls from all levels that you administer. These calls may cover all topics. Again, think before you speak; carefully consider before hitting "reply." If you are district leadership and are contacted by a unit president, it is only polite to refer the question back to the appropriate council leader. You may even want to follow through with a phone call of your own to the council and report the call/question so they can follow through on the question or issue.

If someone asks you a question you feel you can easily answer, stop and consider. Are you getting the whole story? Have they already contacted their appropriate advanced leader? Is the person making the rounds until he or she gets the answer they want? You may want to respond with a generic, "Let me look into this question/situation and get right back to you." Then make sure you do get back to them. But always make the appropriate council or unit leaders aware of the question or situation for followup action.

Always try to respond in a timely manner. Phone calls should be returned within 24 hours. E-mails should be responded to within the same time frame, even if it is to say you don't have the answer but you'll get back to them. If you are unable or unwilling to answer let them know that you will refer them to an appropriate source and when.

Leadership Services Commission



Club Drugs

Office of the Attorney General

John Ashcroft

The most challenging aspect of America's drug problem is its continual change in form. As the popularity of various drugs rise and fall, new "trendy" substances entice our children to become addicted. One such danger is in the form of "Club Drugs" which include MDMA (or "Ecstasy"), Methamphetamine (or "Meth"), Ketamine, GHB, LSD, and Rophnol.

Unfortunately, the proliferation of Club Drugs is growing more serious. MDMA use by 8th graders has almost doubled in the past year alone. These drugs, and others like them, can permanently damage cognitive and memory functions, altering a child's life forever. Club Drugs are responsible for assault, rape, serious accidents and even death. Contrary to what drug traffickers and other groups tell potential customers, Club Drugs are not harmless — their effects can be fatal.

It is time to take action. The Office of the Attorney General has established within the Department of Justice a **Teen Drug Use Initiative** to address this serious problem. With the initiative as focal point, efforts targeted at the major distributors and continuing work with state and local law enforcement has begun to stop the supply of drugs.

In addition, an informative pamphlet to help parents and other youth role models learn about the perils of Club Drugs is now available. "Tips for Parents—The Truth about Club Drugs" will help parents understand the symptoms of Club Drug use, as well as how to handle suspected drug abuse.

It is the hope that this information will help families and communities take responsibility for educating children about the dangers of drugs. The most effective place to fight this deadly problem is not in the halls of the federal government agency, but in homes, classrooms, churches, synagogues, mosques and workplaces in every neighborhood in America.

Copies of the pamphlet can be obtained from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at <www.ncjrs.org> or 800/851-3420.

Community Concerns Commission

Parents, Did You Know?... Just wearing a seat belt may not provide enough protection for your child!

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration recommends every child between the ages of 4 and 8 who weighing between 40 and 80 pounds should ride in a booster seat. A booster seat allows the shoulder belt to fit properly over your child's collarbone and the lap belt to fit snugly over the hips. Without a booster seat, your child is more susceptible to injuries in a car crash.

The easiest way to know when children are large enough for an adult seat belt is to evaluate whether the child can sit with their back straight up against the seat cushion while their knees bend over the seat edge without slouching.

One of the biggest challenges to for booster seat user is child acceptance. Several key tips for choosing and using the right booster seat include

1. From an early age, explain to young children that they will use a booster seat when they are older.
2. Emphasize that the booster seat is for 'big' kids.
3. Let children help in selecting the seat.
4. Make sure the seat fits your child's weight and height.
5. Try installing a seat in your vehicle before purchasing it. Make sure it fits the vehicle seat and restraint system.
6. Always consult your vehicle owner's manual before purchasing and installing a child safety seat. Most will offer specific instructions and list special equipment needed for proper installation of a child safety seat.

Confused about where to purchase a booster seat or what seat is best? Most department stores carry them near the infant and child seats. The proper booster seat for your child is one that positions the seat belt properly over the collarbone and low over the hips. For cars with low back seats, a high back booster seat should be used. ALL children age 12 and under should always ride in the back seat. It's a safer location for small bodies.

*Automobile Club of Southern California
Learning For Living, Spring 2001
Community Concerns Commission*



CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM

Helping Students Cope with National Tragedy

In the aftermath of the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, many Cable in the Classroom networks and cable companies across the country quickly produced materials to help students cope with the tragedy.

Both C-Span and CNN developed study guides to foster critical thinking in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Nickelodeon produced Nick News: Special Edition "Kids, Terrorism, and the American Spirit" with Linda Ellerbee. MTV quadrupled its daily news coverage including a critical look at anti-Arab sentiment in America and youth-related aspects of the attacks, such as the potential for the draft and how college and high-school students are coping. National Geographic Channel ran a special segment of "National Geographic This Week" that examined what the Koran says about violence. The Animal Planet Rescue Truck helped care for animals injured or lost in the evacuation of the area.

"The events of September 11th have not only far-reaching global implications, but long-term implications for today's students," says Donna Krache, the senior curriculum development manager at Turner Learning. "This is the defining moment of their generation." It is up to educators to present these events in an appropriate, thoughtful curriculum setting. Parents can also play a key role in helping their students cope by being informed themselves.

To review the Cable in the Classroom's offering of information and links to programs, articles, advice and discussion questions, go to the **Feature Articles** area of <<http://www.ciconline.org>> and click on **Teaching About Terrorism**.



A Dad's Perspective

Yes, I am a dad and I am in PTA. It did not start out that way. I was just giving my wife a ride to a meeting. As I sat there listening to the district PTA board members discuss how to help their respective units, I realized that I had quite a few things in common with the majority of them.

First, I love my children very much, all four of them, and wish for them the best education, as well as the safest environment possible. Even though we live in the north rural area of the state, I would still like to see some of the "Big City" learning opportunities offered to the schools here.

Next, I am in a communications career field and like the exchange of information. I have always believed that the more information you can get, the better you are able to make decisions, especially ones that affect your children and their education. At the district meeting there was a lot of information flowing about all aspects of the school system, PTA unit involvement, parenting education, and events in various local areas.

There was also this underlying current of camaraderie. You know, the way everyone seemed to know who was who and what was going on everywhere. I also liked the way they just invited me in and showed some interest in my opinions and ideas.

Finally, I saw the way everyone helped each other in their various areas, and covered for the members that were absent. This made it feel OK if I was not able to commit a lot of my time to PTA. I consider myself lucky if I can get a couple hours a week from my schedule for PTA.

So, while I was attending this meeting with my wife, they needed someone to fill in as membership chairman for the district. As this was my second meeting, I felt comfortable enough to volunteer. When I look back at it, I know that having other men present helped enormously with the decision. One of the men was on the California State PTA board of directors and the other was the PTA district president.

As the new saying goes, "This is no milk and cookies PTA;" the new level of involvement and commitment is remarkable. We are in the 21st century now, and all parents should be involved, at some level, in their child's path to knowledge and maturity. Do not just let the "system" make all the decisions. In this respect, the system would be everyone else's system, not your system.

I would like to see more dads involved in PTA at all levels. We should take as much interest in our children as everyone else. Also, it has been a blast so far; I have met and seen more people in the last two years than I have in the previous six.

William Webster, Membership Committee



Let PTA Help You Build Successful Partnerships

Today's schools, families and communities want stronger parent involvement, improved school quality, and higher student achievement. Building Successful Partnerships, a program developed by the National PTA, helps to identify the needs of the school community and develop effective ways to meet those needs.

PTA recognizes that schools with well-structured, consistent parent involvement programs experience profound benefits for students, parents and educators. When school communities work together education improves. National PTA set standards for parent and family involvement program; research done by PTA shows the benefits of involving parents in their children's education include:

- higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
- better school attendance
- increased motivation, better self-esteem
- lower rates of suspension
- decreased use of alcohol and other drugs
- fewer instances of violent behavior
- greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education

Effective parent involvement benefits the entire community. Request a Building Successful Partnerships workshop on:

1. Putting the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs into Action
2. Working with Teachers and Administrators
3. Forming Action Teams, Creating Policies, and Developing Action Plans
4. Defining and Overcoming Barriers to Parent Involvement
5. Working with the Business Community

Call your PTA district president or the California State PTA office at (213) 620-1100 to schedule a Building Successful Partnerships workshop in your area. Presentations can be adapted for any audience and time schedule. Obtain the resources you need by requesting this program for your school group, a community meeting (such as Chamber of Commerce), or your teachers and administrators.

Parenting Education Commission





Characteristics of the 529 College Savings Plan



Paying for children's higher education expenses can be a daunting task. Today, the average cost of a four-year private college education is more than \$100,000. By the year 2020 the price is projected to exceed \$250,000. The key to preparing for these expenses is to begin saving early and to save regularly. The 529 College Savings Program is a tool to assist investors in this process.

Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code was created as part of the Tax Reform Act of 1997 to help families save for the costs of higher education. This program differs from other college saving alternatives (UGMA, UTMA, Education IRA) because it has much greater contribution levels, earnings grow tax-deferred, beginning January 1, 2002, withdrawals are tax-free at the federal level, and account assets remain in the control of the Account Owner for the lifetime of the account.

When setting up a 529 account there are three parties involved: Account Owner, Beneficiary and Contributor. The Account Owner has control of the assets and determines when withdrawals are taken. The account is established on behalf of a Beneficiary who is the prospective college student. The Beneficiary may be changed at any time without tax consequences. A Contributor is any person who makes contributions to a 529 account. Anyone may contribute to a 529 plan regardless of his/her income.

High Contribution Level

Contributions to a Beneficiary's account are made with after-tax dollars and may be as much as \$250,000 total depending on the selected program. The account balance has the ability to grow beyond the contribution limit. However, if the balance surpasses the limit, no additional contributions may be made to the account.

Tax Benefits and Withdrawals

Assets within 529 accounts grow tax-free at the federal level and tax-deferred at the state level. When withdrawals are taken from the account and used for qualified higher education purposes, the earnings are taxed at the Beneficiary's tax rate for state tax purposes, which is usually much lower than that of the Account Owner. (Withdrawals made for non-qualified education expenses are taxed at the Account Owner's tax rate and are subject to a 10% penalty.) For tax purposes, each distribution received from a 529 plan is part principal and part gain making the tax ramification less significant. Withdrawals are treated as ordinary income in the year in which they are received. At this time, there is no federal tax deduction for most state's 529 programs and typically no tax deduction at the state level.

If the Beneficiary Does Not Attend College

If the Beneficiary chooses not to go to college or if the Beneficiary has completed college with a balance in his/her 529 account, the Account Owner has a number of options:

- Change the Beneficiary to a member of the original Beneficiary's family.
- Keep the same Beneficiary and allow the balance to grow for future Beneficiaries. There are no age limitations for the Beneficiary on fund use.
- Withdraw the assets for nonqualified expenses and pay a 10% penalty and the earnings will be taxed at the Account Owner's tax rate.

Estate Planning

The 529 College Savings Plan offers a flexible estate-planning tool for investors. Each contribution made to a 529 account is considered a completed gift and is removed immediately from the Contributor's estate for federal estate tax purposes. A Contributor may make a maximum contribution of \$50,000 per Beneficiary. Contact your financial institution or advisor for complete information regarding 529 accounts.

Investment Options

Currently Deutsche Banc Alex, Merrill Lynch, TIAA-CREF, and Fidelity offer 529 programs; other financial institutions will announce programs soon. Each program will differ slightly, but the objectives will remain the same: assets grow tax-free at the federal level and tax-deferred at the state level, withdrawals are taxed at the Beneficiary's tax rate, and Contributors receive estate planning advantages. Again, the key to being prepared for the overwhelming expenses associated with college is to start saving early and save regularly.

This information has been provided to you for information purposes. The California State PTA does not recommend one plan over another plan.

Finance Commission

Recent Parent/Student Guides from EdSource

California's New Mathematics Standards: What Students Are Expected to Learn (9/01) explains the state's new ambitious math requirements for K-12 students and discusses some of the issues involved in implementing those standards. This two-page guide is available in English and Spanish. Download free from;

http://www.edsource.org/pub_guide_math.cfm.

Recent Changes in UC Admissions Policies (9/01) describes the University of California's new policies, such as Dual Admissions, that are aimed at enhancing the diversity of its student body. This two-page guide discusses the impact of these new policies, including changes in the grade/test formula, on students seeking to gain admission through the traditional approach. Available in English and Spanish. Download free from:

http://www.edsource.org/pub_guide_uc.cfm

California's New Merit-Based Scholarships (2/01) details California's state-funded merit scholarship programs. This two-page guide is a must-read for every parent and high school student, as the scholarships ensure that students in every public high school in the state—from small rural schools to huge inner-city campuses—are eligible for scholarship dollars. Available in Spanish and English, it may be downloaded free from:

http://www.edsource.org/pub_guide_merit.cfm.

— Before You Give, Do Your Homework —

As generous contributors to volunteer efforts, PTA members are frequently asked to contribute personally to other organizations. Is there anyone out there who keeps track of legitimate charities? Is it possible to determine how much money is spent on administration? Is it possible to learn the salary of each chief executive officer? Remember, if a group doesn't want to send you information, why should you send them money?

Generally, before making a donation, you should ask for a letter from donation-seeking groups verifying your gift will be tax-deductible. Review the organization's financial statement in addition to the tax return for additional notes and other information that may be insightful. Contributions to groups with a 501(c)(3) status are automatically tax-deductible. Many groups fall into nonprofit categories where your contribution is deductible only under certain circumstances.

A few tracking organizations maintain Web sites to assist you in research regarding an organization's true financial charity picture. The largest online database <www.charitywatch.org> is maintained by Philanthropic Research Inc., Williamsburg, VA. It lists more than 850,000 nonprofits and includes tax returns; this site is expanding to include not-for-profits.

The Better Business Bureau Giving Alliance, Arlington, VA, lists hundreds of national charities at its Web site <www.give.org> and includes fund amounts dedicated to programs and administration, etc. This BBB site also indicates whether the charity meets its fundraising standards, which require charities to share their financial statements and spend a reasonable amount of donations on programs.

The American Institute of Philanthropy uses letter grades to rate about 400 charities <www.charitywatch.org>. See the Web site for the print copy of its quarterly "Charity Rating Guide and Watchdog Report." Groups earn A's and B's when 75% or more of the budgeted expense is allocated to programs.

The State of California Attorney General's Office of Consumer Protection and Business Investigation is responsible for charity oversight in California and maintains detailed information about financial and personal property donations on its Web site. Additional reports and legal requirements can be found under the "Publications" tab on the Web site.

Communications Commission

If you are no longer a PTA president, please forward this and all mailings immediately to your successor.

Articles appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted in PTA unit, council and district newsletters only. Please credit the California State PTA.

PTA IN CALIFORNIA

930 Georgia Street, Los Angeles, California 90015
PH (213) 620-1100
FAX: (213) 620-1411
World Wide Web address <www.capta.org>
Email <info@capta.org>

Fall/Winter 2001. Official newsletter of the California State PTA, Volume 64, No. 4. Eight issues published annually: Summer, Summer/Fall, Fall, Winter, Winter/Spring, Spring, Spring/Summer. 2001-2002 Subscription rate \$5.00. Circulation 6,800. ©2001 California Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students, Inc. All rights reserved. PTA® is a registered service mark of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

President: Jan Harp Domene
Vice President for Communications: Linda Mayo
Editor: Sharon Bartholomew
Photography: HERFF JONES
Photography Division

Charity: Check It Out List

On the Internet

<www.guidestar.org>

Lists more than 850,000 nonprofits with tax returns for about one third.

<www.give.org>

Financial information for hundreds of nonprofits. Indicates when groups meet Council of Better Business Bureaus fundraising standards.

<www.charitywatch.org>

Letter grades rate about 400 nonprofits.

<www.caag.state.ca.us/charities/index.html>

California Attorney General's Web site on California Charities with reports, California requirements, FAQs, inquiry and complaint desk.

Through the Mail

"Charity Rating Guide and Watchdog Report" (\$3.00)

American Institute of Philanthropy
4905 Del Ray Ave., Suite 300W
Bethesda, MD 20814

Better Business Bureau "Wise Giving Guide" (free)

BBB Wise Giving Alliance
4200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22203

CALIFORNIA STATE PTA
930 Georgia Street
Los Angeles, California 90015-1322

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Los Angeles, CA
Permit No. 27408