

PTA[®] in California

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE PTA

SEPTEMBER 2005



From the President...

Rather than the welcoming message that I had planned to write, I must send a more serious request to you at the beginning of this new PTA year. We all come to our PTA positions through different paths. However, we generally get started because we want to be more involved with our child's school. We want to know what is happening at the local school site and we are willing to work with others in the local school community to see that our children are not exposed to health and safety risks, that the best educational and support services are being provided. In working to achieve this for our own children, we quickly learn that in order to have these benefits for our children, we must work to have them for all children. In the PTA organization, we recognize that we want to have the opportunity for all children to learn, to thrive and to grow in a secure and safe environment.

In 1988, PTA leaders worked with the leaders of other organizations for the passage of the historic Proposition 98. That law placed into the Constitution of the State of California the promise that in setting the budget for the state each year, a minimal guarantee must be met for the educational needs of California's children. Proposition 98 did include provisions for a delay in meeting a portion of the annual guarantee in years when the elected Legislature set an amount less than the guarantee. Note, the law does not provide that the amount due to the students in California for education be forfeited, but that it be paid

back. In January of 2004, the California State PTA, as a member of the Education Coalition of California, met with the governor and accepted his promise that, if an agreement could be reached to pass the state's budget with less than the guarantee, the promised funds would be paid back. The governor broke that promise when he proposed a new budget in January of 2005.

With the placement of Proposition 76 on the ballot for a special election on November 8, 2005, the people of California are being asked to break their promise to guarantee a minimal portion of the state's annual budget be provided for the education of our children. We are being asked to break the promise of representation we give to our elected officials by granting to one individual, the governor, the power to determine how and when a fiscal crisis exists and to take action to cut funds as determined by that one individual. The passage of Proposition 76 at the November 8 Special Election would still require that our local school board, cities and counties adopt a balanced budget each year, however, they would annually be faced with the fact that they might have to break their promise to provide services if, later in the year, the governor decides to cut spending. The health, safety and general welfare of not only our children, but of all of us is at risk.

I ask each of you to join with me and to work with other organizations and agencies on a path of action to defeat Proposition 76. We must keep our promise to the children of California.

*Brenda Davis, President
California State PTA*



Setting the PTA "Member Ship" Afloat at Back-to-School Time

As our children prepare for the new school year, it's time for all of us—parents and teachers alike—to get ready, too. This is a time of renewal. In addition to the new clothes and new school supplies that go along with this time of year, there is a return to routines at home and, most importantly,

a renewed focus on learning.

Take time to help your child get ready to go back to school. Get to know your child's teachers, and begin the flow of communication between your home and the school. Make a vow to check those backpacks every night for important notices and information, such as how you can become more involved in your PTA.

When I took the helm as National PTA president in late June, I asked all PTA members to help keep the PTA "member ship" afloat, and you can become involved. Invite others in your

neighborhood and community to join PTA and to participate in school events and activities. Be sure to tell parents the benefits your PTA involvement has had on your child and on you personally. Remember that whether or not adults in your community have children in school, they can support the PTA by becoming members. If you have a PTSA in your community, encourage the students to join and get involved. It's time we all get on board the PTA member ship!

*Anna M. Weselak
National PTA President*

Reaching Out With Translations

Most PTAs in California are being challenged by the multiple languages that their families speak. In order to be inclusive and inviting to all, PTAs often need to find a way to translate their materials and their meetings.

Finding translators is the first hurdle. Here are some ideas:

- Put a sign on the counter in the school office that says, “Do you speak...? (and list all the languages spoken by the children in your school) and “Would you be willing to help another parent who speaks one of these languages?” Include a contact name, phone number, and e-mail address.
- Check with the school district to see if they have translators in the languages parents need translated. PTA may have to pay for their services.
- Recruit people to help translate through English Language Learner (ELL) teachers and aides, community leaders, local colleges, adult education programs, or the county office of education. Perhaps high school students in upper level language classes could do some translating for Service Learning credit.
- Use the school newsletter, website, local newspapers and community bulletin boards to seek translators.

Once you have translators, ask them if they are willing to be called to provide a translation of the PTA or school newsletter (or perhaps a flyer for an event) or interpret for your meetings, but remember when speaking to stop after every two or three sentences so the interpreter can translate accurately. Seek out students who may be interested in doing some audio or video recording of messages, notices and parenting tips in different languages that you can use.

California State PTA provides most of its brochures in Spanish (as does National PTA). The *Toolkit* and the *Parents Empowering Parents Guide* have both been translated into Spanish. California State PTA also provides grants to assist with translations. Contact your PTA district to find out how to apply.

Adapted from the National PTA website article “Building Membership”
Membership Committee

Fundraisers

Selecting Appropriate Fundraising Activities

When considering and carrying out large fundraisers, keep the following concerns in mind:

- Is the fundraising project related to PTA’s educational, charitable and philanthropic purposes as a tax-exempt organization?
- Does the project violate PTA’s noncommercial policy?

Safeguards for Conducting Fund-Raising Projects

To protect the PTA and its volunteers against loss, theft and mismanagement of funds, the following procedures must be followed:

1. Ensure that the proceeds of the fundraiser are designated for a specific purpose that meets the purposes of the PTA.
2. Read all contracts carefully.
3. Ensure that the contract is signed by two elected officers of the PTA, one

of whom must be the president, after the membership has voted to conduct the fundraiser.

4. Follow the financial procedures required by the California State PTA bonding insurance program.
5. Ensure that money is always counted by at least two unrelated PTA board members in a secure location.
6. Plan for the safe-keeping of money until it is deposited in the bank.
7. Follow correct financial procedures:
 - Deposit receipts promptly.
 - Keep accurate, current records.
 - Provide treasurer with a written report.
 - Use the Payment Authorization Form (*Toolkit*, Forms 411).
 - Pay bills by check (not cash) after a vote of the association.
 - File IRS Form 990/990EZ when gross receipts for all PTA income for the year are over \$25,000.

Finance Commission

Organize Yourself the Simple Way

Organization is always on top of everyone’s to-do list. Frequently we make the task too complicated. Use spiral notebooks to simplify your life. The inexpensive notebooks come in a variety of sizes and colors and are readily available. Consider the following ways that a simple spiral notebook can help you become better organized and de-stress your life.

- The small (3"x5") size notebook is ideal for your running to-do list. It fits nicely in a purse, briefcase or pocket. Use it to note reminders instead of using small bits of paper that are easily lost. As items are completed simply cross them out or rip out and discard the page.
- Many families have a desk area in the kitchen or family room that serves as the family’s communication center. This space becomes cluttered with little slips of paper that become lost in the shuffle. Use a larger size (8.5"x11") notebook as the family message center. Purchase a divided notebook with three to five sections - one for each member of your family. Assign one section to each family member.

When one takes a telephone message for another, it gets written down in the appropriate notebook section. Family members are responsible for checking their own sections daily and retrieving their own messages. These sections may be also be used to delegate tasks to family members.

- Using a spiral notebook as a message log is also beneficial at the office. Write down all voicemail messages and telephone contacts in the notebook, dating each entry; cross off as each call is returned or the appropriate action is taken. The running log of your phone calls can sometimes be useful.
- Use a highlighter pen to cross out the messages. Your eye will naturally go to the un-highlighted items when glancing at the list, but you will still have the benefit of being able to read the “crossed out” items should you need them for reference.
- Use a spiral notebook as an exercise or food log, expense log, or for other notes to help you achieve your personal goals.

Member Services Commission

After-School Care

In single families or families where both parents work, nearly half of those families have a time gap between the end of the child's school day and the end of the parents' workday.

The need for after-school care has grown rapidly in the last decade. In finding an after-school program parents should ask these questions:

- What options does the school offer?
- If the school doesn't provide after-school care, is there a local child-care service that does?
- Are the children well-behaved?
- Are the instructors in control of the classroom?
- Do the children seem happy?
- Will the program meet your child's needs and interests?
- Is learning the central mission?
- What is the cost?
- What are the hours of operation?

The benefits of a structured after school program are:

Safety After-school programs offer alternatives to risky behaviors, such as drug use and juvenile crime.

Academic Children who receive academic support from after-school programs often improve attendance, work habits, and interpersonal skills. Providing time and space for quiet study also can improve academic performance.

Social Children can interact with other children and with adult role models.

For more information contact 1-800-424-2246 to find out about after-school programs in your area or 1-877-467-4800 (toll free) for United Way's Success by Six program for tips on after-school programs.

Community Concerns Commission

The Value of PTA Membership

Becoming a PTA member opens up leadership opportunities and builds skills in communication and advocacy strategies. Members who are willing to get involved are a valuable resource for starting and maintaining programs and projects to benefit children, youth and the community.

Enrolling members in the PTA is a yearlong activity that is carried out by a membership committee. The primary reason for developing membership in the PTA is to build an informed team of individuals to work on behalf of all children and youth. The committee plans, implements and evaluates the membership campaign following the guidelines of the National PTA and California State PTA.

In addition to increasing enrollment, the campaign can

- make the public aware of the resources that the PTA offers to parents, educators and members of the community who work, in large and small ways, to secure a nurturing, healthy environment for children; and
- strengthen the PTA voice so policy makers in all areas, at all levels, will hear a strong, unified message on behalf of children, youth and families.

For more membership ideas, consult the National PTA *Annual Resources for PTAs*.

Resource - *California State PTA Toolkit*, Membership Chapter
Membership Committee

PTA Represents *everychild.onevoice*.

Members of the California State PTA Board of Managers will voice the PTA position on behalf of children at the following meetings held during the 2005-2007 term of office. Appointments of PTA representatives to these groups were approved at the Board of Managers meeting held in San Diego on July 18, 2005. Additional appointments to statewide coalitions, commissions and committees, some meeting frequently, others a few times, will occur throughout the two year term. Reports are submitted to the California State PTA Board of Directors and Board of Managers for information and advocacy on behalf of California's children and families. Contact your PTA district president for further information.

California Arts Alliance

California Coalition for California Juvenile Officers Association

California Coalition for Children's Safety and Health
(CCCSH)

California Coalition for Children's Safety in the Work Place

California Comprehensive Center Advisory Board

CCSESA, CCSBA, California State PTA Annual Spring

Conference Planning Committee (California County
Superintendents Educational Services Association,
California County School Boards Association)

California Department of Education:

CalServe K-12 Service Learning Initiative Advisory Board

Education and Restrictive Environment Committee

Education Partnership Office, Family Area Network (FAN)

Family Involvement Network (FIN)

P-16 Council

State School Attendance Review Board (SARB)

State Selection Committee for Teacher of the Year

State School to Career Council

Title I Committee of Practitioners

California Parent Center

California State Superintendent of Public Instruction's:

Advisory Committee on Nutrition Implementation Strategies

Local School Wellness Policy Task Force

Child Nutrition Advisory Committee

Ed Source, Board of Directors

Education and the Environment Initiative for Parent

Involvement Strategies

Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center

The Education Coalition:

Communications Group

Funding Adequacy Work Group

Leadership Council

Technical Committee

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

California State PTA representatives will attend the following conferences and events:

American Cancer Society, California Youth Leadership
Summit

California School Employees Association Conference

CLASS Conference

National PTA Leadership Training Conference

U.S. Navy Meet the Fleet for Educators

Member Services Commission

WASC? What?

Among the many statewide boards and commissions that include PTA representation is the Accrediting Commission for Schools of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), one of six regional accrediting organizations recognized by the United States Department of Education.

The purpose of WASC is “to foster excellence in elementary, secondary, adult and post-secondary education by encouraging school improvement through a process of continuing evaluation and to recognize, by accreditation, schools which meet an acceptable level of quality, in accordance with established criteria.” The Accrediting Commission for Schools accredits both public and private elementary, secondary, and adult schools or non-degree granting post-secondary institutions of higher education in California, Hawaii and the Far East. Duties of commissioners, including the PTA representative, involve participating in discussion and voting on policy matters that affect the procedures and operations of the accrediting program, and determining the terms of accreditation for the schools being evaluated. Each commissioner is responsible for reading reports of Visiting Committees, which serve as the basis for recommended terms of accreditation.

Criteria for WASC California public school accreditation are found in the manual *Focus on Learning Joint Process WASC/California Department of Education*. The accreditation process includes a Self Study conducted by the school, evaluation by the Visiting Committee, and any necessary follow-up. Components of the school’s Self Study are (1) review of progress from the previous Self Study, (2) development of a School/Community Profile, (3) development of Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs), (4) analysis of the quality of student learning based on academic standards and ESLRs, (5) analysis of the quality of school programs based on schoolwide criteria, and (6) development of a schoolwide action plan and monitoring process.

Members of the Accrediting Commission for Schools represent, in addition to PTA, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the California School Boards Association (CSBA), the California Teachers Association (CTA), the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), California Department of Education (CDE), California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO), Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (SDA), Western Catholic Educational Association (WCEA), Hawaii State Department of Education (HDE), Hawaii Government Employees Association, Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS), Hawaii Public and Private Schools, and the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS). The Commission also includes at least three “public members” nominated from business, community or public organizations. PTA’s representative, as with other organizational representatives, is chosen by the Commission’s Nominating Committee from among three to four resumes submitted by the California State PTA. Each representative is expected to serve the Commission for two three-year terms. PTA’s current representative to the Accrediting Commission for Schools is Ann Desmond, a member of the California State PTA Board of Managers Education Commission. Further information on the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the Accrediting Commission for Schools can be found at www.acswasc.org.

(This is the first article in a three-part series. In the next issue of PTA in California: “Why Should Your School Be Accredited?”)

Education Commission

Handle Money Safely

At this time of the year, many units hold membership campaigns and fundraisers. Before holding a fundraiser and/or event, the activity needs to be approved by the association. Using basic PTA guidelines to handle funds generated by any activity is wise and can prevent many problems. Following are financial guidelines:

- Never publicize where money is to be counted.
- Two unrelated PTA board members must always count the money. This can be the treasurer and the event chairman or the chairman and a committee member. Both must sign a cash verification form verifying the amount. If the treasurer did not initially count the money, he or she will then do so with the event chairman and will give a numbered receipt verifying the amount.
- Never deposit money in personal accounts or a school account.
- Never leave money in someone’s car trunk or home. Night deposits and 24 hour banking can and should be used as needed.
- Two people should take large deposits to the bank. If necessary, the treasurer can contact the local police authorities before the event and ask for an escort to the bank. Contact the bank ahead of time so that the treasurer can be given a lock bag to place in the night depository.
- All checks should be marked “For Deposit Only to the _____ PTA. Account # _____.” Duplicate deposit slips must be made so that the treasurer will have a copy for the records.
- Funds should be deposited daily even if the project is ongoing.
- Never pay bills from the cash generated by the event. All bills must be given to the treasurer for payment by check.
- A detailed report of all receipts and expenditures must be completed within a few days after the conclusion of the event or activity. The report must be presented to the executive board and the association at the next meeting. For further information, consult the *California State PTA Toolkit*, Finance Section, and the *Insurance and Loss Prevention Guide*.

Finance Commission

DON'T FORGET

If you earn more than \$25,000 you must file a 990 form with the IRS.

Check the *Toolkit* for more information.

Ensuring a Productive and Focused PTA Year

The most important first step for a PTA is to set their goals for the upcoming school year. By establishing goals, your PTA is building the roadmap for the organization and setting your direction. Goals allow you to focus the important mission of your PTA and help avoid the “inch deep and mile wide” syndrome of ineffective organizations.

Goals help you to stay on task by just asking the simple question, “Does this activity/function achieve or help us meet the goals our PTA has set?” The evaluation you perform after every PTA activity or meeting should include that question in some form. Goals can also help you avoid some possible conflicts within your PTA by providing the framework against which you measure your work.

Your PTA’s goals should reflect the charge of your PTA and hopefully the Purposes of PTA. Your goals should be established with the membership so that they feel ownership of the goal. That way each member is connected with your work and the expectations of the organization are clear. Members appreciate and value organizations that are straight forward about their commitments and recognize that their time and energy are given to an activity they believe in. Goals can also require an assessment of the needs of your PTA and you may find that there are new ways to service the children and families.

Establishing goals also helps your PTA be more accountable to your membership and community. Your PTA will build a reputation for good work for children and families and your goals make it a transparent and popular process. Your goals allow your PTA to be measured on a constant basis by a yardstick that your members design.

Once you have written your goals, you will need to determine the priority order of action. Next you will write the objectives or actions you will take to help meet the goals. Then you will have to develop the activities to reach your objectives and how/who will do them. This is called an action plan. When finished, you will need to report your results and set a specific method for evaluation.

California State PTA has designed a multi-step process to help units, councils and districts establish written goals. It includes components that require group participation, research and evaluation of past activities, writing the goals, and then determining the objectives needed to accomplish the goals, developing the action plan and determining evaluation procedures. Please contact your district PTA for additional information.

Adapted from PTA University Extension Class: Goal Setting
Leadership Services Commission

Every Volunteer Minute Counts

Historian records, like minutes, should be kept forever.

Collection of hours is important to any PTA for many reasons. Of greatest importance is to maintain our federal tax exemption which states, “Any organization granted nonprofit charitable status must receive one-third of its support from the general public.” Valuation of service or volunteer hours expended in carrying out PTA’s purposes will positively affect public support for PTA.

Volunteer hours can be reported in the narrative portion of the IRS Form 990 report and can also be placed on the PTA’s financial statement. From information provided by nonprofit charitable organizations, the IRS publishes a figure, adjusted annually, that attributes a dollar value to volunteer hours donated. This enables PTAs to publish an annual donation to local communities and statewide.

Advertising the value of volunteer hours expended by PTA can be a valuable marketing and publicity tool. It raises the public’s awareness of our organization. Frequently, foundation grantors request the number of volunteer hours an organization expends annually when considering the apportionment of grant funds. The volunteer value helps the grantor understand the extent of the group’s parent involvement, support and commitment to its purposes. This aids the grantors in determining the amount of award to be given.

Adapted from the *California State PTA Toolkit*
Member Services Commission

What Can I Do at Home to Help My Child Succeed in School?

Create a home environment that encourages learning and schoolwork. Establish a daily family routine of mealtimes with time for homework, chores and bedtime as well as time for family activities.

Show your children that the skills they are learning in school are an important part of the things they will do as an adult. Let them see you reading books, newspapers and computer screens; writing reports, letters, e-mails and lists; and doing things that require thought and effort.

Make sure that your home has lots of reading materials that are appropriate for your child. Keep books, magazines and newspapers in the house. You can find many good books and magazines for your child at yard or library sales. Books make good gifts.

Encourage your child to use the library. Ask the librarian to tell your child about special programs that they might participate

in, such as summer reading programs and book clubs and about services such as homework help.

Limit TV viewing to no more than one hour on a school night. Be aware of the shows your child likes to watch and discuss their choices with them. The same goes for video games.

Help your child learn to use the Internet properly and effectively.

Encourage your child to be responsible and to work independently. Taking responsibility and working independently are important qualities for school success.

Show an interest in what your child does in school. Support their special interests by attending school plays, musical events, science fairs or sporting events.

Offer praise and encouragement for achievement and improvement.

*U.S. Department of Education,
No Child Left Behind
Parent Involvement Commission*

Bylaws Are Your Friend

People tend to think of several things when they hear the term “bylaws.” These include “restrictive,” “rules,” and “Who needs them?” to name just a few. But the more familiar you are with your unit, council or district bylaws, the more you appreciate their ability to assist you in running your organization smoothly.

First, look at your bylaws and find the *issue date*. This is easily found on the cover of the *current* bylaws. The most current unit bylaws are cover dated “June 2005” and have a bright yellow cover. Council bylaws show the issue date right on the front of their lime green cover. District bylaws have a bright pink cover. If your bylaws do not have these colors, it is time to review and revise.

Article I of your bylaws states the *name of your organization as it was chartered*. This is the legal PTA name and must appear on all legal documents such as minutes, tax filings, any communication to state PTA, etc.

Article II states the *purpose of our organization*. This is good to review with your board to ensure your goals are on task.

Article III outlines the *basic policies of PTA* including noncommercial, non-sectarian and nonpartisan policies. It says your PTA cannot enter into memberships with other organizations-with exceptions. Study and see what these exceptions might be. Article III also details what to do should your unit, council or district be dissolved.

Article IV details *membership*: per capita dues and how much goes where, remittance deadlines and other pertinent membership information. This is especially important as you begin membership campaigns.

Article V lists your *required officers, nominating committee requirements, term restrictions and dates of elections*. This invaluable information is right at your fingertips.

Article VI gives *details of your officers and their duties as stated in your bylaws*. This covers president, vice presidents, secretary, treasurer, etc.

Delve into the information contained in your bylaws. You’ll soon find you can’t do without them!

(Next article will cover Articles VII-XVI.)

National PTA Field Service Newsletter

February 2005

Bylaws Committee

“My PTA/PTSA Awards”

The California State PTA’s “**My PTA/PTSA**” Award program recognizes the achievements of units and councils in multiple areas of involvement and shares the ideas with other PTAs/PTSAs throughout the state.

With a single, simple, one-page application, units and councils have the opportunity to submit in one--or all--of the categories as well as requesting consideration for Outstanding Unit or Outstanding Council. Award winning units and councils receive two paid registrations to our annual PTA Convention (in Anaheim, May10-13, 2006), the opportunity to present an overview of their program at a convention conference and a certificate and an eye-catching flag to display at their school site. In addition, award winning units and councils will be recognized on stage at convention!

My PTA/PTSA Award categories are:

- Membership Creativity
- Your Outreach
- Parent Involvement
- Teachers, Staff and Administrator Involvement
- Student Involvement
- Allied Agencies/Community Partner Involvement
- Advocacy

To learn more about the award program and to receive an application, please refer to the *California State PTA Toolkit*, Section 7.6.2 or log onto the California State PTA website www.capta.org

Application must be received in the California State PTA Office no later than February 1, 2006.

Member Services Commission

International Walk to School Week - October 3-7, 2005 Walk or Bike to School Day - October 5, 2005

Safe Routes to School Programs (SR2S) look different from community to community. Yet they all share the same common goal: to improve the health of children and the community by making walking and bicycling to school safer, easier and more enjoyable. Federal legislation was introduced that would provide funding to support improving pedestrian routes to school.

These programs involve parents, community members, school staff, traffic engineers, city planners, law enforcement officers, community leaders and many others. They work to assess the safety of school travel routes, building or adding crosswalks, adding crossing guards, educating students and drivers about safe travel and encourage walking and biking to school.

Programs can include:

- Local programs to improve sidewalk conditions and bike routes near schools
- Use of traffic calming devices to slow traffic and give pedestrians priority
- Programs to educate children on walking and biking safely
- “Walking school buses” in which one or two parents or volunteers escort a group of children on the walk to school
- Increase traffic enforcement around school

For more information go to www.walktoschool-usa.org

Community Concerns Commission

SAVE THE DATE
California State PTA
Convention
Anaheim Convention
Center
May 10-13, 2006

In March 2005 the California State PTA quietly opened www.captaforums.org. The forums were envisioned as a joint project between the communications commission and the student involvement committee to increase communication among students. The project was designed to allow every student PTA member in the state to talk with one another, share ideas and collaborate together.

The forum's actual existence was first announced at the March 2005 meeting of the California State PTA Board of Managers. Between this meeting and the convention in May the forums team worked to help iron out the last bugs in the system and started actual use of the forums to create an inviting atmosphere for the public when the forums debuted.

At convention this year, word about the forums got around to some of the students in attendance and usage picked up slightly. But, most people it seemed, decided to 'wait and see' on the forums and watch further development on the project from afar. Since then, the forums have started to grow. Districts are beginning to link to the forums on their websites and posting activity on the forums is now on the rise.

The student forum is still in its infancy. The time to join the forums and start keeping track of them is now. The

forums are still being used to bring students together, but have also expanded to become an excellent vehicle to allow every member of every PTA in California to communicate with one another.

The forums allow a broad range of information to be shared with minimum effort. Anything from program ideas to new ways to educate your school community about various issues or to provide enrichment to discussion about ongoing educational legislation to keep everyone in the loop. Fundraising ideas, bylaws questions and membership campaign ideas are also readily available. The most important aspect of the forum is it allows anyone with a good idea to share it with everyone who wants it.

The idea of direct member to member communication has been a long time coming, but now that ability is here. To join the discussion, go to www.captaforums.com, register an account and join the expanding community of people who share your concerns, problems and passions. The next time you see a PTA member who hasn't yet utilized the forums, do them a favor and clue them in: captaforums.org

Communications Commission/Student Involvement Committee

Meeting the Special Needs of Military Children and Families

PTA is committed to meeting the needs of the children and families in our communities but when you look at the big picture of diversity, are you including the special needs of military children and families? Of course every child and family is special, but as a group, military families have some unique characteristics. There are ways that a PTA can build their mission to support and provide a strong network for these families.

Every parent wants the best for their children, including parents serving in the military. Yet these parents may be thousands of miles away or gone for long periods of time, so PTAs need to find ways to help these parents connect to their schools. It is important to parents, teachers and the school that the education process for all children continues in a positive manner.

Start by gathering information around the school to determine the families involved and checking on the status of staff. You may have teachers or classified personnel that are in the National Guard or Reserves and their deployment will affect many children at once. Once you have a sense of the numbers involved you will have a better idea of the options you may choose.

Your PTA can select an activity that focuses on the location, number of miles away, professions or skills of your mil-

itary personnel. You can offer additional homework assistance or mentoring opportunities for children with deployed parents or just make an additional effort to make sure those new caregivers are notified. You can add special call-in messages or additional information on your website for parents to stay connected to their children. The PTA can sponsor a civic activity to honor parents serving in the military or to explain the different branches and functions of the services. Military children often move more than other children and your PTA's welcome orientation could include a guide for the child and another for the parents.

PTAs often mobilize special events or speakers to help parents guide their children through traumas occurring throughout the world and widely publicized through the media. Children of military families are especially vulnerable to this stress and their presence and special needs should be taken into account. PTAs can also provide information on community resources and create support networks to address the children's fears and behaviors.

The Military Child Education Coalition says "When everything else is unsettled, school can serve as an oasis of stability for children." Make sure that your PTA does everything it can to create and keep the lines of com-

munication open to support the needs of *everychild.onevoice*. and provide that oasis!

Additional information on www.militarychild.org

Leadership Services Commission

Exactly What Is Parent Involvement?

Parent involvement in your child's education can include:

- Reading to your child
- Checking homework every night
- Discussing your children's progress with teachers
- Voting in school board elections
- Helping your school to set challenging academic standards
- Limiting TV viewing on school nights
- Becoming an advocate for better education in your community and state.

Or, it can be as simple as asking your children, "How was school today?" But ask every day. That will send your children the clear message that their schoolwork is important to you and you expect them to learn.

Some parents and families are able to be involved in their child's education in many ways. Others may only have time for one or two activities. Whatever your level of involvement, do it consistently and stick with it. You will make an important difference in your child's life.

NEA - National Educational Association
Parent Involvement Commission



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- √ Binders for the *Toolkit* and
Annual Resources for PTAs
- √ Special Items

**Be sure to check the website
 for specials and new items**

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

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The mission of the California State PTA is to represent
 our members and to empower and support them with
 skills in advocacy, leadership and communication to
 positively impact the lives of all children.

Reaffirmed 2004

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