

PTA helps push anti-bullying bill into law

With new legislation and a new parent-education partnership, PTA stands up to bullying on multiple fronts

On Oct. 9, Governor Jerry Brown signed important legislation to protect students from bullying and harassment. The California State PTA sponsored the bill, AB 1156, by Assemblymember Mike Eng.

“Bullying is a serious issue at home and in school, and this legislation takes important, concrete steps to reduce it,” said PTA President Carol Kocivar. “This bill gives students, their families and their teachers effective tools to help better ensure school is a place where everyone is free to learn and teach without the threat of harm.

“California State PTA commends the Governor for signing this legislation, and we thank our nearly 1 million members who made their voices heard by writing letters and taking other action to support this bill,” Kocivar added. “We also thank Assemblymember Eng for his leadership on this legislation.”

“PTA was a powerful and essential partner in this bill’s success,” said Assemblymember Eng. “Having the voice of so many parents behind this legislation raised public awareness of the need to take action. Working together, we made a real difference for the children of California.”

The bill requires training of school site personnel in the prevention of bullying, and it gives victims of bullying priority for transferring out of a school, if requested.

Inaction can have dire consequences.



PTA leaders join Assemblymember Mike Eng at a press conference Sept. 29 in support of AB 1156, anti-bullying legislation sponsored by California State PTA. From left, they are: Barbara Miller, President, Burbank Council of PTAs; Donna Cunningham, Third Vice President, Legislation, Burbank Council of PTAs; Assemblymember Mike Eng, author of AB 1156; Dr. Marcia Wilson, President of Alhambra Council of PTAs; and Kathy Moffat, California State PTA Legislative Advocate.

To read about more of PTA’s anti-bullying efforts, see page 11.

Students who are bullied are more likely to be depressed, to think about and attempt suicide, and have behavior problems and difficulty learning.

Bullying contributes to poor school attendance, which is a barrier to improving student achievement for all, and particularly to efforts to close the achievement gap, a longstanding priority for the PTA. Nationally, an estimated 160,000 children miss school every day because of bullying.

Bullying affects many children. In California, nearly a third of boys and girls in the seventh grade reported that they

had been afraid of being beaten up once or more while at school in 2008.

In a past survey, 89 percent of local PTA leaders in California expressed high levels of concern about bullying in school. In order to address their concern, California State PTA sponsored the legislation, working with Assemblymember Eng.

PTA members made their support clear, and wrote more than 1,000 letters in support to the Governor – more than 600 in one day alone.

“Every step of the way, our members supported this important bill,” said PTA Legislative Director Patty Scripter. “It’s a real testament to the power of the PTA voice.”

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Founders Day showcases the power of PTA advocacy



*Alice McLellan Birney,
Phoebe Apperson Hearst and
Selena Sloan Butler*

Each year, traditionally on February 17, PTAs organize Founders Day events to take stock of past accomplishments, recognize current achievements and celebrate the potential of PTA.

In recognition of our heritage, it is designed to honor the vision of the founders – Alice McLellan Birney, Phoebe Apperson Hearst and Selena Sloan Butler. As children’s advocates, their efforts resulted in substantial improvements in the education, health and welfare of children.

To enhance community awareness, Founders Day showcases the best that PTA has to offer today.

The outstanding service to children of current leaders and community partners is acknowledged with Honorary Service Awards.

To build leadership capacity for our future, a freewill offering is collected at Founders Day. These funds are earmarked to develop leadership and extend the work of PTA on behalf of all children and their families.

Founders Day provides a unique opportunity to renew our dedication to the core purposes of PTA as defined more than a century ago. It also lets us reflect on our legacy and show appreciation for the power of PTA in advocating for children yesterday, today and tomorrow.

We cordially invite you to our **Wow! PTA!** annual convention to be held **May 9-12, 2012** in Anaheim.

The last few years have been tough on all of us in California. Through it all, PTAs are making a difference in the lives of California’s children and families. We’ve been hearing about units, councils and districts overcoming challenging obstacles and making great strides in helping all children. You continue to provide wonderful programs, engage in advocacy and support learning. We just keep saying, “**WOW! PTA!**” We are inspired by all of you, so it just made sense to make **WOW! PTA!** our convention theme.

We are hoping to “**WOW!**” you, too. New this year is a one-badge system. Workshop tickets, event tickets and your address information will be loaded onto your badge. You’ll just “Tap ’N Go” all over the Convention Center and hotel. We know topics important to you include bullying, nutrition, physical activity, the arts, and educating the whole child. Workshops and general meeting speakers will focus on these and other issues.

We will be in Anaheim, so of course there will be time to go to Disneyland. Convention ends on Saturday. Bring the family and spend Mother’s Day enjoying the *Happiest Place on Earth*.

Registration begins February 1, 2012. Just go to www.capta.org. If you register during the month of February, you not only get a discount on registration fees, but you will be entered into an opportunity drawing to spend a day behind the scenes at convention.



Spend some time with the people with headsets, meet the President and President-elect and see convention from an entirely different angle.

Our host hotel is the beautifully renovated Anaheim Hilton Resort and Spa. It’s been redesigned with the conventioneer in mind, and it’s just a few yards from the Convention Center. All workshops and hearings will be held at the Hilton. We hope you will join us there. Stay three nights at the Hilton Anaheim Resort and Spa (May 9-12, 2012). With any two full-time registrations, you will receive a **free** third registration of any type (voting or non-voting). *This includes registering two students and getting the adult registration free!* This represents a savings of \$199! Proof of stay is required. Reimbursement will be mailed to you in June.

For more information and exciting updates visit us at www.capta.org, friend us on Facebook and keep in contact with your district PTA.

WOW! PTA! Convention is just a few months away. See you there!

~ *Convention Commission*

Volunteer power – a priceless resource

PTA volunteers typically donate dozens of hours each year in service to their school community. Now more than ever, with budget cuts, their contributions are a crucial resource to sustain the quality of education for children in California.

Between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011, California State PTA volunteers contributed more than 14 million hours. These volunteer hours are estimated to have a monetary value of

more than \$327 million. The true value is priceless.

Thank you for your gift of time, effort and energy to help the children in your community as a PTA volunteer.

Making an extra effort to track and report your volunteer hours enables California State PTA to raise awareness and brag a little about all of the important and vital work that PTA members accomplish throughout the state for all children and their families.

PTA revolution? Yes!

It's just a hunch, but I bet when you hear the words "Parent Teacher Association" you don't think of "parent coup" or "revolution."

You might think of a dad helping teachers move books and materials into a new classroom or organizing the school fitness fair.

You might envision a mom speaking at a school board meeting.

But revolution? Nah.

Well, let me share an insight.

PTA volunteers have been on the front lines for years.

From helping in the classroom to campaigning for a parcel tax or a school bond, PTA members gain the knowledge of how schools work – or don't work – and the leadership skills to make a difference.

And then an amazing thing happens.

PTAs take ordinary people from where they are to where they dream they can be. Making a difference for children. And for our communities.

This does not happen by chance.

PTA invests in its members.

Our PTA University trains regional leaders throughout California on how to run a not-for-profit 501(c)(3). A legislative conference teaches advocacy skills. A new School Smarts Parent Academy teaches parents how to support their children and their schools. The annual PTA convention provides workshops in leadership, communications, health, and parent engagement for thousands of volunteers.

'PTA members gain the knowledge of how schools work – or don't work – and the leadership skills to make a difference.'



Local council and district PTAs hold training events that provide thousands more with important skills.

It starts out as a parent wanting the best for a child. Then throughout California, it morphs into community organizing, alliance building, and public engagement for public education.

From the historic creation of kindergarten nearly a century ago to sponsoring legislation to support the arts in schools, PTA members identify a need and work for change.

They track bills in the Legislature and speak up at the state Capitol on major policy initiatives.

PTA is a plaintiff in an historic lawsuit to require the Legislature to establish a new system of school funding that meets the needs of all students.

It supports healthy foods in our schools not just through legislation but also through monitoring the salad bar and the vending machine.

It sponsors legislation to protect children from bullying and partners with community organizations to create toolkits for parents and teachers to use at home and in school.

PTA partners with other organizations that share our commitment to children in order to make our voices even stronger.

It provides resources and training for parents new to the U.S. school system so that they can understand how their schools work and how to help their children succeed.

PTA is the largest and most consistent voice for adequate school funding.

The parent who sells gift-wrap to pay for school supplies learns pretty quickly the system is broken and that the best fundraiser of all is a line item in the state budget.

With a more than 100-year track record, PTA is not a one-trick pony or the reform du jour. It builds community – school by school.

We've been carrying on a different sort of revolution for decades: bringing people together to speak with one voice on behalf of all of our children.

*~ Carol Kocivar
California State PTA President
president@capta.org*

Forum helps PTA arts leaders see the big picture

The California State PTA has long supported every child's right to a complete education that includes the arts. That support has gained momentum, thanks to several active efforts, including hands-on training.

A special forum for PTA arts education leaders was held at the Orange County Department of Education on Oct. 24. More than 55 PTA leaders attended, many of them arts education chairs. Others included Reflections Program chairs and legislation chairs, as well as other stakeholders in the arts community.

Another forum is planned for Northern California in early December, with details to be finalized. (Stay posted on the website, at www.capta.org.)

The forums are part of ongoing efforts to ramp up advocacy for arts education, including a newly formalized PTA position of arts education chair. The chair job description was developed a year ago.

The forum was made possible through a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to advance the goal of promoting quality arts education for every child.

Key topics covered at the gathering included why the arts are an essential part of a complete education; how parents can support arts education; and how to be effective as a PTA arts education chair.

The keynote speaker was Ron Jessee, California County Superintendents Educational Services (CCSESA) Regional Arts Lead, San Diego County Office of Education.

Jessee wanted to let participants know how crucial they are to the effort to support arts education. He pointed to the support of the vast majority of Californians who say the arts are crucial to a child's education. Turning that sentiment into policy is where PTA's power comes in.

"PTA is uniquely poised to do that, because they don't have a vested interest



Above: Participants at the PTA arts forum received hands-on training to help them promote the arts in education.

At right: Keynote speaker Ron Jessee told forum attendees that their support for the arts is key to changing schools.



in arts education," Jessee said. "They're not teachers of arts education, and they're not paid lobbyists; they just want children to have a complete education that includes the arts."

Studies show that the arts in schools help to keep students engaged, raise API scores and lessen discipline problems. But Jessee says he thinks the most compelling arguments are found in personal experiences.

"I think it comes down to the stories," said Jessee, who has his own.

"I was a kid who flunked everything through the seventh grade because I just was not engaged in school at all," he said. "Then I discovered arts, and I discovered that I could like school." Today, Jessee engages in many art forms, as an organist and music director, choreographer, painter and photographer.

But you don't have to be an artist to benefit from arts in education, he said: "As we're looking to remain creative to remain competitive, the best way to do it is to give our children a complete education that includes the arts."

Mary Galuska, co-chair of California State PTA's Special Committee for Arts Education, said PTA's goal for the

arts in schools moves far beyond bringing in the occasional assembly.

"As PTAs, we're not here to bring arts into the school on a one-time basis," she said. "What we need to do is work with school districts to make sure the arts are integrated into the everyday curriculum."

Shanin Ziemer, arts education chair for Fourth District PTA (Orange County), said the effort must begin with basic understanding: "How do we educate our educators and administrators about the value of arts – and our parents as well?"

Ziemer said she hopes to encourage more PTA members to take on the position of arts education chair and strengthen the connections among education foundations, PTAs, local arts organizations and others.

How you can help

Visit the Smarts page of the California State PTA website www.capta.org/sections/programs-smarts/. There you can

- Sign up for the Smarts e-newsletter; and
- Learn more about how to become an arts education chair.

Latest survey highlights the importance of speaking up for all children

During the past three years, California State PTA's leadership has made it a top priority to ask you, our members, for more input about a range of topics.

Based on your input, particularly through our annual survey, we've developed new programs such as e-Bylaws and PTAEZ to support local leaders in your work. We've also strengthened our commitment to training, developed new outreach materials, revamped our website and joined a historic lawsuit related to school funding, among other actions.

This year's survey, sent by email in September, generated a record response of more than 1,600 local members and leaders, representative of all 29 of our PTA districts.

All of the recent survey responses were shared with our 120-member State Board of Managers at our October meeting, and they helped inform the board's development of our statewide Advocacy Goals for the next two years.

These goals reflect those issues you told us you cared most about, as well as the issues where we feel we can make the greatest impact.

2011-13 Advocacy Goals California State PTA

- Adequate funding for education to ensure every child has the opportunity to meet his or her full potential.
- Prevent bullying and cyberbullying.
- Access to a full curriculum for every student that includes physical education, arts and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).
- Support children's health by promoting healthy lifestyles and putting health and support services within reach.
- Promote greater and more meaningful family engagement.
- Support the needs of vulnerable children.

'The recent survey showed the increasing value you place on PTA's advocacy work.'



For instance, the survey showed that 89.2 percent of parents think adequate state funding for education is extremely important, and 98.6 percent rate it as extremely important or important. That was by far the highest response for any single issue.

Next was preventing bullying and cyberbullying with 72.1 percent of respondents rating it as extremely important and 95.6 percent rating it as important and extremely important.

(To view a summary of the **2011 Programs, Issues & Advocacy Survey**, click on **Advocacy** in the top navigation bar of the PTA homepage at www.capta.org.)

The recent survey also showed the increasing value you, our members, place on PTA's advocacy work.

Fifty-one percent of those surveyed ranked "legislative advocacy and programs that help us improve laws and speak up for children" as "extremely important" to you and your PTA, and another 29 percent said it was "useful." We've seen a dramatic doubling in the past two years in the percentage of members rating advocacy as "extremely useful." It's now viewed as the most useful PTA program or service, right alongside the training and support we provide to develop leaders and to help you run your local associations.

The impact of budget cuts

In the latest survey, 96 percent said that in the past few years state budget cuts have forced their local schools to cut or eliminate programs and services to students.

Hardest hit have been programs and services that provide students with extra support or that help all students receive a well-rounded educational experience, such as summer school (which tops the list with 33 percent saying it has been eliminated, and another 28 percent saying it has been cut significantly); arts education; buses and transportation; instructional aides; physical activity and sports programs; Gifted and Talented Education; enrichment programs, issues; libraries, librarians and media centers; school nurses and student health centers.

While we don't need a survey to know that much has been taken away from our students in these times of negligent underfunding, now we have concrete data about the severity of the cuts from a PTA and parent perspective.

With those data in hand we plan to take a lead role in calling on all state leaders, organizations, businesses and individuals to unite around tackling the problem. This includes qualifying a measure for the November 2012 state ballot that will begin to restore funding to schools for essential programs.

We appreciate the time you take as PTA leaders and members to share your input about what matters most. Rest assured that your state PTA leaders are listening and taking action, based on what you tell us.

~ Paul Richman, Executive Director
prichman@capta.org

Attendance matters from the beginning

After years of viewing poor attendance as mostly a middle and high school problem, school districts across California are now realizing they need to look more closely at attendance in the early grades.

Research shows that one in 10 kindergarten and first grade students nationwide is chronically absent, missing 10 percent of the school year, or about 18 days annually. Chronic absence isn't just truancy, it includes students missing too much school for any reason, not just unexcused absences. One study found that only 17 percent of students who were chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade read at grade level by the end of third grade, compared to 64 percent of students who attend school regularly.

Another problem with poor attendance is the cost to schools. Financially, each absence costs a school approximately \$30 to \$40 in state aid.

Hedy Chang, a San Francisco-based researcher who heads the national Attendance Works initiative, has ana-



lyzed data from selected California districts and found absenteeism rates higher than the national average. In Oakland, for instance, nearly one in seven students was chronically absent. In rural Del Norte, it was one in six. There is no statewide number, because California does not track attendance in this way.

In July, Chang urged the State Board of Education to help schools and districts monitor and address chronic absence starting in the early grades.

Attendance is one of the issues that has been a focus of California State PTA's Community Concerns Commission.

Local PTA chapters can support this effort in the following ways.

- Advocating for including attendance in the state's longitudinal database. California is one of just five states that do not.
- Urging your local school district to calculate chronic absence data in addition to truancy and average daily attendance, both of which can mask the number of students who miss school excessively.
- Encouraging PTAs to educate parents, starting in elementary school, about how crucial it is to show up at school. Visit www.attendanceworks.org to learn more. Under the "Tools and T.A." tab you'll find materials you can use for attendance presentations, as well as a flier for parents.

PTAs and schools work best by working together

When PTAs are aware of and set their goals based on needs identified by the school, the staff and the community, great things can be accomplished for students.

Build a positive relationship and use a team approach.

- Focus on positive collaboration.
- Share information on PTA's mission, work and materials.
- Recruit PTA members to help realize the goals of the school and the PTA.
- Be inclusive and seek people out to become involved.

Assist in establishing regular two-way communication.

- Develop the PTA calendar with the principal early in the year.
- Share information and materials from California State PTA.
- Encourage the principal to be an active member of the PTA.
- Encourage PTA members to volunteer for School Site Councils, school district committees, or other opportunities that afford a way to gather the latest information. Then ask them to share what they have learned at PTA meetings.



Provide training and parent involvement opportunities.

- Provide meaningful parent engagement activities.
- Survey members of the school community to assess what they see as relevant and of value.
- Offer to provide parent training at the school.
- Offer materials relevant to the needs of the school found in the *Toolkit* and the *Parents Empowering Parents* manual.
- Invite the principal to leadership activities sponsored by your council or district PTA.

These are just a few of the ways that PTAs and schools can work together.

Northmont Elementary PTA takes Parent Association of the Year award for fitness

Northmont Elementary PTA, Ninth District PTA (San Diego County), received the Parent Association of the Year Award at the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Spotlight Awards Ceremony held in Sacramento. Chairman Jake Seinfeld and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson congratulated winners at the ceremony. Governor Jerry Brown awarded the gold medals. California State PTA President-elect Colleen You and Vice President for Health Linda Mayo also attended.

Every day at Northmont Elementary starts with a PTA sponsored Run-for-Fun activity with incentives for students. The PTA also sponsored a ballroom dance class, a fitness fair, and a fitness camp including nutrition education. The PTA even sponsored a fitness trainer to work with students every week.

Northmont PTA President Matt Wood and his son, fifth-grader Scott, accepted the award in Sacramento.

"This was a great day for us," Wood said by phone afterward. "Scott had an absolute blast the whole entire day."

Wood says the credit for the award belongs to all the PTA volunteers at the school who drive these fitness programs, including Tony Lawrence, the unit's health and fitness chair.

Wood particularly likes the PTA's ballroom dancing program, which has been offered to fifth-graders at the school for several years.

"It's always a fun event – and it gives students who may not be superstars in the classroom a chance to shine with their peers," Wood said. "When a kid gets confidence from something like that it carries over into the classroom."

The prize came with a \$10,000 award that the PTA will use to further pump up its fitness program.



California State PTA President-elect Colleen You joins Matt Wood and his son Scott at the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Spotlight Awards ceremony in Sacramento. Wood is president of Northmont PTA, which won the Parent Association of the Year Award.

"Now that we've got the check, we have a planning committee to decide how to spend it," Matt Wood said. "It's really exciting for us."

The Governor's Challenge encourages Californians to be active for 30 to 60 minutes a day at least three days a week for a month. The awards honor Californians who use innovation, inspiration and initiative to promote physical activity and good nutrition. More than 1.4 million individuals participated in 2011.

Be inspired to create your own PTA program. Visit the website www.calgovcouncil.org/spotlight/ to view the winners' activities and the 2012 awards program. Kenny Rogers, executive director of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, serves as an advisor to the Health Commission of the California State PTA.

Second and third place went to Tassajara Hills PTA, Thirty-Second District PTA, Contra Costa County; and Helmers PTA, Thirty-Fourth District PTA, Los Angeles County, respectively.

Other awardees from PTA schools include the following.

Grand Prize School

Ruskin Elementary, Sixth District PTA, Santa Clara County

Loma Vista Middle, Twenty-Third District PTA, Riverside County

Live Positively School

Hickman Elementary/Middle School, Eighth District PTA, Stanislaus County

Regional School Awards

Jefferson Elementary, Peralta District PTA, Alameda County

Etiwanda Colony Elementary, Fifth District PTA, San Bernardino County

Fremont Intermediate, Twelfth District PTA, Ventura County

Plymouth Elementary, First District PTA, Los Angeles County

Kinoshita Elementary, Fourth District PTA, Orange County

Challenger Middle School, Ninth District PTA, San Diego/Imperial counties

Teacher Awards

Kristen Holm, Lucille Smith Elementary School, Thirty-Third District PTA, Los Angeles County

Vicki Tolan, Alta Loma Junior High School, Fifth District PTA, San Bernardino County

Principal Awards

Debra Schroder, Mel Gauer Elementary, Fourth District PTA, Orange County

Eileen Smith, Loma Verde Elementary, Sixteenth District PTA, Marin County

Serve up great ideas for school breakfast

Our children need nutritious meals to learn, grow and achieve. The School Breakfast Program can help ensure that students start each day ready to reach their full potential. At the same time, the program brings much-needed federal dollars to our schools by reimbursing meal costs.

Breakfast at a Better Time and Place

More than 90 percent of non-charter, public schools in California offer the School Breakfast Program. But we fail to reach 70 percent (or 2.3 million) of our low-income, public school students with the program each day. What accounts for this participation gap?

Most schools that offer breakfast only do so at one time and place – in the cafeteria before the school day begins. But school breakfast works best if the “when” and “where” of meal service meets students’ needs. For effective solutions, we need to start thinking after the bell and outside of the cafeteria.

Classroom Breakfast

With the Classroom Breakfast model, all students are offered breakfast at the start of the school day. Breakfast is served, eaten, and cleared during the first 10-15 minutes of class while teachers conduct administrative activities or begin the day’s lessons. In July 2010, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Controller confirmed that time spent eating and serving Classroom Breakfast can count towards instructional minutes. Classroom Breakfast is most common in elementary schools, but can work at other grade levels. Classroom Breakfast is particularly well-suited to schools with a high percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Second Chance Breakfast

With the Second Chance Breakfast (2CB) model, a school breakfast is offered during morning recess or snack break. 2CB is effective for serving students who, due to family schedules or transportation issues, are not able to eat in the morning before school begins. 2CB is also effective for students who are not hungry before school, but do get hungry before lunch. Second Chance Breakfast can work well at all grade levels, regardless of a school’s percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

Grab n’ Go Breakfast

Grab n’ Go Breakfast can be served before school, during the mid-morning, or even on the bus. Grab n’ Go Breakfast typically consists of bagged food that is laid out on carts. These carts are located in high-traffic areas such as school entrances. Students pick up a meal as they walk by the cart and eat on the way to class, in designated dining areas, or during the first few minutes of class. Grab n’ Go is common in secondary schools but can work at all grade levels. The model is particularly well-suited to campuses with relatively small cafeterias. Grab n’ Go Breakfast can be successful regardless of a school’s percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

District Spotlight

Sanger Unified School District (SUSD)

Sanger Unified School District in Fresno County utilizes several different breakfast models, including Classroom Breakfast and Second Chance Breakfast, to meet the needs of its 18 schools. One K-8 campus, Quail Lake Charter School, serves breakfast from the cafeteria during a mid-morning nutrition break that coincides with recess. Less than 30 percent of Quail Lake students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Approximately 10 percent of students participated when breakfast was served before school in the cafeteria. More than 30 percent of all students are served each day with the nutrition break model.

Sanger High School also employs the Second Chance Breakfast model to serve breakfast. Approximately 75 percent of Sanger High students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. With the mid-morning breakfast, 80 percent of all students participate each day.

SUSD’s innovative breakfast programs are fiscally sustainable and have significantly increased revenue for the district’s child nutrition programs through federal and state reimbursements tied to participation levels. Principal support has been a key factor in the programs’ success. Parents stay actively engaged through a Nutrition Committee that was established in 2009. Through the committee, parents can provide feedback to the Child Nutrition Services staff and promote the district’s nutrition programs.

Compton Unified School District (CUSD)

Since the fall of 2010, Compton Unified School District has successfully implemented Classroom Breakfast at each of its more than 20 elementary school sites. This impressive effort was spearheaded by the district’s nutrition services director who worked diligently to win the support of administrators, teachers, cafeteria staff, parents, and the board of education. Since the Classroom Breakfast program began, teachers have reported a noticeable improvement in students’ ability to concentrate. Teachers have also reported being pleasantly surprised that students are so careful and neat during the breakfast service.

The new program resulted in huge gains in the number of students eating breakfast at school, with participation more than doubling.

What PTAs can do to put breakfast first



1. Learn about school breakfast participation in your district. Visit “Your District’s Data” at www.breakfast-first.org and talk to your district’s food/nutrition services department.
2. Find out how breakfast is served in your school. Explore effective service models to help find the right fit for your school. Go to www.breakfastfirst.org for videos, fact sheets, case studies, best practices, and other resources.
3. Spread the word about the academic, health, and fiscal benefits of school breakfast. Work to garner support from parents, teachers, students, principals, and other stakeholders.
4. Partner with your district’s food/nutrition services department to promote school breakfast among students and their families.
5. Consider fundraising to raise the start-up costs for a fiscally sustainable school breakfast program. Supplying items such as insulated roller bags for transporting breakfast to classrooms can be a big help, for instance.

Have questions? Please contact the BreakfastFirst Campaign:

- **Northern California and Bay Area:**
Tia Shimada (tia@cfpa.net)
or Markell Lewis (markell@cfpa.net)
- **Central Coast and Central Valley:**
Ellen Braff-Guajardo (ellen@cfpa.net)
- **Southern California:**
Nicola Edwards (nikki@cfpa.net)

It’s the law

Fresh drinking water in school cafeterias

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) has created a web-based toolkit (www.waterinschools.org) to provide districts, parents, students and other health and education stakeholders with valuable resources to help schools implement the new state and federal laws requiring all students to have access to free, fresh drinking water in school. These new laws recognize that water is an essential nutrient for proper cognitive and bodily function, overall health, and obesity prevention.

Why were laws needed? Unfortunately, a recent survey in California found that more than 40 percent of responding districts reported having no access to free, fresh drinking water in school cafeterias.

Check the website often. There are photos, best practices, studies and lots of other resources to help ensure that California students have ready access to the healthiest, calorie-free beverage – drinking water!

School Wellness Recognition Program

The 2011-2012 School Wellness Recognition Program is sponsored by the American Cancer Society (ACS) in collaboration with the California State PTA and California Action for Healthy Kids. The program is designed to recognize and applaud schools that are making significant improvements in their school environment related to healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-free lifestyles.

ACS and PTA want to motivate and empower California schools to step up and create healthy school environments. PTAs will be recognized in the spring for their efforts.

To register your PTA, complete the Recognition Program application by **March 30, 2012**. By applying at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SWRP>

For more information please phone: (510) 464-8146, or email david.saunders@cancer.org



Creative programs help students thrive

A graphic for the PTA Spotlight Award. It features a spotlight shining on a yellow oval containing the text "PTA Spotlight Award". Below this, the text "Program Categories" is followed by a numbered list of eight categories. At the bottom, it says "Applications Due: February 1" and "To learn more, visit www.capta.org".

**PTA
Spotlight
Award**

Program Categories

1. Leadership Development
2. Programs for Student Achievement
3. Environmental
4. Family Involvement
5. Membership and Outreach
6. Collaboration
7. Advocacy
8. Student Involvement

Applications Due: February 1
To learn more, visit www.capta.org

Creative programs are the heart of PTA, providing special opportunities to boost student achievement, stimulate PTA involvement and promote community engagement to enhance campus life for everyone.

Planning and organizing a dynamic program takes considerable time and energy to ensure success. While challenging, PTA leaders understand how truly beneficial their efforts are in meeting the needs of students.

Each year, California State PTA recognizes exceptional PTA programs with the *PTA Unit Spotlight Awards*. The awards, in eight categories, celebrate PTAs' achievements in launching outstanding programs, and provide a forum for sharing these programs with other PTA leaders at a convention workshop.

In May, Charles Helmers Elementary PTA in Santa Clarita Valley PTA Council (Thirty-Fourth District) received the *PTA Unit Spotlight Award* for collaboration for developing a model music and arts program.

After identifying the need to widen students' appreciation of the arts and culture, PTA leaders at Helmers devised strategies for cost-effective ways to fill the gap.

Local arts organizations and the school district were approached to explore ways to work together.

As a result, a new PTA-sponsored program, C.H.O.R.D.S. (Culture-Helmers-Origin-Rhythm-Discover-Sing), was developed. In collaboration with Canyons Performing Arts Center and the Education Department of the Los Angeles Music Center, this PTA created an innovative music and arts program with workshops for classes along with an artist in residence for each grade level.

By widening the cultural horizons of students, Helmers PTA not only fulfilled the immediate needs of its community in a creative way, it laid the groundwork for the future academic and social success of its students.

Be sure to elect your PTA's most important committee

PTAs have many different committees.

Some are special committees, formed for a specific program or project, such as Red Ribbon Week or Carnival. These committees only exist for the time period it takes to complete their programs. Some committees are standing committees, formed for a specific task that is ongoing, such as hospitality. But what is your PTAs most important committee? **The nominating committee.**

The nominating committee has a tremendous influence on the future of your PTA unit, council and district. It is the only PTA committee that is not appointed by the president. It is **elected** by the membership at an **association** meeting at least two months prior to the unit's annual election meeting. It is such an important committee that it is the only one whose selection and duties are detailed in the bylaws.

Your unit bylaws state how many people need to be elected to the nominating committee. The bylaws also indicate how many alternates need to be elected in the event that an elected committee member cannot attend the meeting. Most PTAs should elect their nominating committee no later than January or February, but your association may want to elect the nominating committee much earlier in the PTA year, and that is allowed.

The committee needs a balance of newer and more experienced PTA members, all of whom should be knowledgeable about PTA. Committee members should also be representative of the neighborhoods served by your school.

The election of the nominating committee should not be a popularity contest based on willingness to serve, nor should it consist exclusively of PTA

executive board members. Nominating committee members should be aware of qualified potential nominees, be familiar with qualifications and eligibility requirements for the offices to be filled, and must be willing to devote adequate time to their responsibilities. Above all, they must be willing and able to maintain confidentiality.

The PTA president never serves on the nominating committee; and, while the parliamentarian has responsibilities for the nominating process, he/she serves as a member only when elected by the membership. The principal may be elected – but is always an advisor to the group. No person may serve on the committee for two consecutive years.

Be sure to elect your nominating committee wisely. Remember: It is your PTA's most important committee.

New California State PTA partnership addresses cyberbullying

As part of PTA's commitment to taking a stand against bullying, the association has partnered with Common Sense Media, a national nonprofit organization, for a new education campaign to combat cyberbullying. Common Sense Media is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children to thrive in a world of media and technology.

The campaign has launched with a new "Cyberbullying Toolkit for PTA Leaders: Stand up, Don't Stand By." It includes parent tip sheets, a parent education video and other resources at www.commonsense.org/pta. This gives PTAs all they need to organize Parent Education Nights on the issue.

"We are thrilled to partner with the California State PTA to help parents and teachers start the conversation about cyberbullying and ethical online behavior with their communities," said Jim Steyer, CEO and founder of Common Sense Media. "Parents and teachers can make a huge difference by



Standing up, Not Standing By:

A Free Cyberbullying Toolkit for PTA Leaders

Every day, cyberbullying hurts kids and impacts the culture at your child's school. Since this issue spans homes and schools, parents and educators across the country are struggling with how to tackle it together.

- But who should lead the charge?
- What responsibilities do schools have?
- What can parent leaders do to help kids avoid this challenge presented by our digital world?

We created this free toolkit to help your PTA answer these questions and take an effective stand against cyberbullying.

Use these resources to organize a PTA Parent Education Night that will start a conversation in your school community about helping kids learn to stand up to cyberbullying.



Brought too you in partnership with California State PTA



getting involved and helping kids understand that a safe online world is everyone's responsibility."

"We are excited to partner with Common Sense Media on this important project and encourage all PTA leaders to use this toolkit as part of your parent outreach and safety efforts," said Carol Kocivar, President of the California State PTA.

The kit includes compelling stories from children, parents and teachers sharing how they stood up to cyberbullying; age-by-age guidance from preschool through high school; and an interactive "promise for parents" to start the conversation with their children that includes scripts and talking points.



Apply for a new Parent Education Award

PTA and Common Sense Media have partnered in creating a new Parent Education Award.

Its purpose is to recognize PTAs for implementing model parent education programs that engage and inform parents and families on digital literacy and citizenship; raise awareness of media/Internet issues affecting children; and empower students to be safe, respectful and responsible in our digital world. Look for the application in the Awards section of the California State PTA website, www.capta.org, under the Programs tab.

National PTA Initiative offers anti-bullying resources

In March 2011, National PTA launched an initiative, Connect for Respect, to encourage PTAs across the country to lead conversations in their school communities about bullying, how it is affecting their communities, and to develop solutions that they can implement collaboratively.

The effort includes lots of resources, from how to put on a Connect for Respect event to best practices in school-based and community-based bullying prevention.



For more information visit
<http://www.pta.org/bullying.asp>

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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

2327 L Street, Sacramento, California 95816-5014

PH (916) 440-1985 • FAX (916) 440-1986

World Wide Web address <www.capta.org> • E-mail <info@capta.org>

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President: Carol Kocivar

Vice President for Communications: Kathryn Cross

Editor: Tiia Bullen

Executive Director: Paul Richman

Media and Communications Manager: Alison apRoberts

Design: Pat Ruiz

The mission of the California State PTA is to positively impact the lives of all children and families by representing our members, and empowering and supporting them with skills in advocacy, leadership and communications.

Adopted October 2009

Upcoming Events

December 2011

- 1 Last day for remittance of per capita dues (minimum of 15 members) to remain in good standing*
- 15 FINAL Resolution & Convention Cover Sheet due*
- 20 Insurance premiums due*

January 2012

Early January – Look for your Convention Registration package in the mail

Third Thursday of January – Reflections Program entries due*

- 31 Workers' Compensation Annual Payroll Report due*

February 2012

- 1 PTA Unit Spotlight Award applications due*
- 1 Graduating High School Senior Scholarship applications due*
- 17 Founders Day

113th Annual California State PTA Convention
May 9-12, 2012
Anaheim

* due in State PTA office

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