

## California State PTA 112<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention Report of the Association – Jo A.S. Loss April 28, 2011, Long Beach, CA

Welcome to the 112<sup>th</sup> Convention of the California State PTA. Thank you for joining us at our premier training event and also one of the best networking opportunities on the planet. It is my honor, as your president, to present the report of the association.

The California State PTA has had an exciting and productive year since our last gathering. The association has focused its energy – just as your units, councils and districts have – on enhancing the lives of California’s children and families. We have strived to meet our mission and to support you in meeting yours. Please join me in reading the California State PTA’s mission statement.

*(On screen) 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.*

Thank you.

We begin each meeting, as we did this convention, by reading our mission statement to remind us of the important work we do and to help keep us moving forward.

As PTA leaders you are trained about the importance of setting goals and priorities for your association. Today will be your chance to examine our efforts in reaching the ones established for the California State PTA.

*(On screen) Goal 1: Build awareness about the critical role of parents, families and PTAs/PTSAs in helping all children reach their full potential.*

In order to build awareness of the value of parent engagement, we choose to increase the visibility of PTA in the media. We have been responsive to dozens of media requests, we have had leaders at press conferences and published editorials, letters to the editor and opinion pieces in many outlets throughout the state. Your officers have been interviewed by media such as The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Mother Jones, Time, The Sacramento Bee and The Wall Street Journal. PTA and parent involvement were featured in a guest column in the California School Boards Association magazine. We are receiving requests for information on issues such as children’s health, transitional kindergarten and science education in addition to the state budget and parent empowerment legislation. We are confident that PTA has a strong reputation for being a knowledgeable resource.

This reputation extends into the field and strengthens the position of your PTAs. As we publicize the value of PTA, it serves to enhance the work that you are doing in your community. Our outreach to your administrators, teachers or school board members translates into a deeper understanding of the purposes of PTA. The more they know about and understand, the better your working relationship can be to collaborate for your children and school.



California State PTA represents you on an amazing variety of statewide committees, working groups, boards, focus groups and councils that illustrate the value placed on PTA participation and involvement. We have a place at the table in such diverse areas as the state Student Attendance Review Board, the P-16 Council, Nutrition LEAP, Family Area Network and EdSource. We have working partnerships with many allied agencies such as Cable in the Classroom, Impact Teen Drivers, Head Start, the American Cancer Society and the National Center for Fathering. Plus we have terrific advisors from organizations like the California School Nurses Association, the California Teachers Association, the Dairy Council, the California Association of Bilingual Educations, the Department of Education and Common Sense Media that also carry our PTA message to their membership.

*(On screen) Goal 2: Promote, increase and support membership.*

Thank you for your incredible response to our second local leaders’ survey. More than 1,000 of you! We have used your answers to identify your interests and needs and therefore we can do a better job of supporting you. We will continue to adapt and make changes to address your interests.

You asked for and we produced high quality membership recruitment materials in English and Spanish that you could quickly personalize for your PTA. Several highlighted different segments of a school’s population that had testimonies to the importance of PTA. And when you told us that getting teachers involved was important to your membership drive, we worked with a state PTA advisor to provide a special teacher-focused piece to assist you.

California State PTA is promoting membership as an ongoing yearlong campaign. A template for guidance and to give you ideas is accessible on the PTA website along with materials on the value of PTA membership.

Here is our newest tool for your use in membership signups.

*(On screen) Public service announcement for PTA featuring Howie Mandel.*

Many of you told us about the value your members place on programs like Reflections and the awards that PTA offers. Our program and member services commission has been revamped this term in order to offer even more emphasis on programs to your membership. Applications for scholarships and grants have been streamlined to make them easier to complete.

It was a wonderful surprise to receive an unexpected donation of \$25,000 from a recipient of a 1930s era college scholarship who chose to pay it forward! His family indicated that the scholarship allowed him to attend college, and he continued on to become a physician. His gift will make a significant impact for our future volunteer, nurse, teacher and counselor scholarship applicants.

Your association has made a huge commitment to data in the area of membership. Your district now has background information that includes a five-year membership history of every unit in California. This will allow them to track and isolate PTAs to identify membership trends earlier to assist units. We have been collecting and publicizing best practices for units that are increasing membership to benefit all of our almost 4,000 PTAs. I hope you use this conference as a chance to talk to others to see what is happening and working for them in their communities.

*(On screen) Goal 3: Promote, support and engage in advocacy on behalf of children, youth and families in our schools, communities, state and nation.*

PTA's job is to educate our members to empower them to become advocates for California's children and families. Over the last year we have explored many different ways to speak up for every one of our state's 9 million children and youth. We have spoken at the State Board of Education, presented to the California League of Middle Schools, educated the child welfare services deputy directors, met with the Governor, legislators and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Advocates have testified at hearings and worked on developing bills. PTA has retained the commitment to address the whole child even as the crisis of the state budget has dominated most interests. The subject matter vice presidents and their commissions have studied special education, teacher evaluation, brain injuries, nutrition requirements, student attendance, kindergarten start dates, and foster children; to just highlight a few.

Some of our positions have been seen as controversial by our membership and others, and we have experienced pushback. I see this as a valuable reaffirmation that you, our membership, provide our authority at every step of our advocacy must be supported by an action of the membership. Your votes here today and at the past conventions support our role as a true

membership organization. This demonstrates how important convention is to the future of PTA.

You have also seen the transition of our advocacy newsletter to an electronic format and the expansion of our legislative alert network. We are providing video alerts and phone blasts. Technology will continue to change the methods that we will have to reach our membership.

Based on two years of research, the California State PTA launched a pilot project this year to help train parents to advocate first for their children and then for arts education. You will hear more about this new approach to empowering parents later on in the convention.

In 2011, any conversation on advocacy would have to include more than a mere mention of the state budget situation. California State PTA has had a consistent message that a balanced approach is necessary to tackle the crisis and has been visible in all conversations. It has been a tough environment to protect all of the aspects of health, education and social welfare that affect children.

*(On screen) Goal 4: Develop, strengthen and diversify leadership at all levels.*

The California State PTA has made a concerted effort over the last year to examine our structure, programs and policies to create an inclusive and diverse culture. The Board of Managers added a Diversity and Inclusion Committee and a Special Needs Committee. Both committees focused on underrepresented segments of our membership.

In November, almost 200 PTA leaders attended our second Emerging Minority Leaders Conference. The day helped all of the attendees understand how different perspectives are addressed and can be valued. Look for additional resources on diversity on our website.

Assisted by an experienced Spanish language media consultant, the California State PTA participated in Spanish media interviews on television and radio throughout California. We had representatives at several outreach events that targeted Spanish speakers. In addition, we have created a Spanish e-mail listserv. Almost all of our materials are now translated, and we have purchased the translation equipment you see in use today.

Your survey results told us that you valued the training provided by the state PTA. We have developed standard power point trainings to ensure consistency and to make them more accessible to the trainers. We have begun the filming of videos to be posted on the website for quick, anytime viewing. Watch for president, secretary and treasurer videos soon. This convention, which is our premier training event, has been designed by you, based on your 2010 evaluations, to meet your training needs. Please fill out your evaluations at the end of the four days so we can continue to make the adjustments you see necessary.

The e-Bylaws process continues to be refined and is being utilized by more of you each day. We are pleased with your

positive comments on the ease of completing bylaws online and hope that this program makes being a PTA officer a little easier.

The State of California and the IRS have not cooperated in making your PTA responsibilities any lighter this year, however. We have dedicated a large amount of time and resources to working with these agencies to get you the most current information. Updates on the new requirements for your PTA's financial and tax reporting are being posted on our website as soon as they are available.

The PTAEZ online financial program is designed to help you spend less time in keeping the appropriate books. I hope that you will examine this offering – that you asked for – to assist you in meeting your fiduciary responsibilities.

So in reviewing our activities in relationship to our goals and priorities, I am proud of the work that we have done. The dedicated Board of Directors, Board of Managers and committed staff have done a terrific job in supporting the mission of the California State PTA and in honoring the spirit of our association. It has been an effort of passionate and committed volunteers to ensure the sustainability of such a valuable and powerful ally for every child, one voice.