



# Principal's Guide to PTA



## Embrace The Future!

Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success.

September, 2016

# Why PTA?

**PTA is the largest child advocacy association** with more than 4 million members in the National PTA and with nearly 160,000 members in the Maryland PTA, whose sole purpose is the education and welfare of all children at home and in the schools and communities nationwide.

**PTA speaks:** PTA speaks for ALL children in ALL parts of the state and nation. We are not a special interest group, except to say that all children are “special” and the PTA will speak out so that children may secure the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education. Local parent groups have little influence over state and national government agencies or legislative bodies.

**PTA provides unified action:** PTA can provide a unified attack on major issues if needed, a unified push to improve legislation, an opportunity to provide public forums for ideas, and a chance to meet with others to share or discuss concerns.

**PTA provides information:** PTA cooperates with other state and national associations concerned with family and child oriented programs. Because of the cooperation, PTA has access to information local groups do not have. The expertise of the Board Members of the Maryland PTA and the National PTA are just a phone call or e-mail away in your time of need.

**Not all problems can be solved locally:** Most laws affecting the education and welfare of children are made at the state level, not by local governments. As a part of the State and National PTA, the local PTA units extend their influence beyond their community and help secure state and national action for the benefit of all children, not only their own.

**PTA cares:** PTA work is directed to anything involving the lives of children-school, home, community, family or peers. We care what influences and molds children’s attitudes and behavior.

**PTA has tax benefits:** Maryland PTAs are exempt from federal income tax under Section 501 (c)(3) of the IRS code.

**PTA has name recognition:** PTA had been around since 1897 long enough to be recognized as a powerful force working solely on behalf of children. When you join PTA, you immediately become a member of State and National associations as well as your local PTA unit. It is through membership in the Maryland PTA and National PTA that you, your local unit, and most importantly, your children will benefit.

# **The Purposes of the PTA**

- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, places of worship and throughout the community,
- To raise the standards of home life,
- To advocate for laws that further the education, physical and mental health, welfare, and safety of children and youth,
- To promote the collaboration and engagement of families and educators in the education of children and youth,
- To engage the public in united efforts to secure the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being of all children and youth; and
- To advocate for fiscal responsibility regarding public tax dollars in public education funding.

## **PTA Mission**

**The mission of the PTA is three-fold**

- A powerful voice for all children.
- A relevant resource for families and communities, and
- A strong advocate for the education and well being of every child.

## **PTA Structure and Function**

### **Local PTA Units:**

- Are chartered by the Maryland PTA when they assume the responsibility of carrying out the PTA Purposes and Mission;
- Are self-governing;
- Plan programs and projects to meet the needs of children and youth in their own communities;
- Are concerned about and study the needs of all children;
- Are made up of individual PTA members who enroll at the local level and automatically become part of the State PTA and the National PTA;
- Should actively participate in PTA Council affairs where applicable.

### **PTA Councils:**

- Are groups of local PTA units organized under the direct authority of the state PTA for the purpose of conference, leadership training, and coordination of the effects of the local units;
- Serve as a medium through which the PTAs of an area can together attach problems beyond the scope of a single PTA working alone;
- Strengthen each unit, enabling it to work more effectively in its own school and neighborhood;
- Serve as a medium in which both the Principal and the PTA leaders can call upon for communication problems;
- Enable PTA officers and chairpersons to exchange ideas and plans to benefit from each other's experience in PTA work, to learn new techniques of leadership, and to receive training for their specific responsibilities through conference and workshop;
- Provide members of PTAs with opportunities to gain broader leadership experience through service in council offices and chairmanships;
- Act as a channel of communication by relaying information, instruction, and news from the state and national;
- Develop leaders, engage in worthwhile community service projects, and broaden public understanding of home-school cooperation.

**Maryland PTA:**

- Is a branch of the national PTA, and interprets and implements its policies and principles;
- Determines programs and policies at the annual state convention of delegates representing local PTAs;
- Provides service to local units through workshops, regional trainings and the state convention;
- Promotes and supports legislation to improve the welfare of children and youth;
- Represents PTA members on statewide committees;
- Publishes an e-newsletter several times a year;
- Was organized in 1915. One of the founding mothers of the National PTA, Alice McClellan Birney, lived in Chevy Chase, Md. She was instrumental in helping to establish the Maryland PTA.

**National PTA:**

- Was organized in Washington D. C., in 1897;
- Includes all local PTA members in the United States and overseas branches;
- Holds an annual convention which is the policy making body of PTAs
- Serves nationally and internationally for children and youth at meetings of other organizations;
- Provides equal services to all its branches;
- Publishes **Our Children** (a e-magazine/magazine), PTA Quick Reference Guides and numerous other useful publications;
- Serves as a national public relations agency for state branches and local associations;
- Endeavors to do whatever needs to be done for the welfare of children and youth that is beyond the scope and resources of state and local PTAs working separately.

## **The Principal and the PTA**

Teamwork has become the model of success in business and industry. It is the key to success in education as well. Teamwork begins at the local school with a partnership between the principal and parents. When parents and the principal work together, they lead the way to success for all children.

### **The Principal**

The principal is the educational leader and spokesperson for his or her school and the school community. It is the principal's leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate of learning, the level of professionalism and the morale of the staff and the degree of concern for students. Though the structure of schools differs from community to community, the main duties of the principal include these:

1. Educational leadership.
2. Seeing that the school follows the curriculum guidelines adopted by the local school board or site base management team.
3. Supervision of school personnel: including training and evaluation, hiring and firing, overseeing teachers and their professional growth.
4. Helping to determine teaching structure, and the types of teaching techniques in the school.
5. Accurate record keeping, supervision of school schedules, and maintenance of proper school discipline.
6. Overseeing the school building; its safety, maintenance and security.
7. Record keeping and accountability for building budget expenditures.

### **The PTA**

More and more parents want to take an active role in their children's education. In order to support the education of all children, the PTA and the principal must strengthen their ties. A working partnership between the principal and the PTA, dedicated to the welfare of all children and youth, can strengthen family life and improve education for all children. Teamwork is the key to success in education. PTAs can do the following to work effectively with the principal:

1. Encourage the principal to speak openly of school goals and concerns.
2. Present PTA concerns and issues to the principal. Develop a forum that allows for frank and open discussion.
3. Focus on education and how to benefit students.
4. Work with the principal or site based management council to set goals. Plan programs that will help achieve these goals.

5. Be alert to staff and community talents and resources and draw on them for the benefit of the entire school.
6. Work with the principal to develop annual school reports and budgets. PTA volunteers can speak in support of budgets and other issues in front of the school board and local government.
7. Keep things seen or heard at school confidential. Honor ethical and legal considerations regarding the privacy of students, staff and their records.

Now more than ever, the partnership between the principal and the PTA needs to be supported and strengthened in order to meet the needs of today's children and youth.

Remember to keep each other informed. Review plans for events. Work out problems and misunderstanding in a direct, honest way. Keep an open mind. Listen to each other. When working together in the community be positive and enthusiastic. Portray the positive teamwork. Develop a win-win attitude and celebrate each other's accomplishments.

### **The Parents, the PTA and the Principal**

Parents need to send their children to school eager and ready to learn, self disciplined and prepared to accept the authority of the school staff. Parents must make sure all children understand the rules and support the disciplinary action. It is important to supervise homework assignments and take an active role in the education of their children.

As PTA leaders you must help parents learn about school programs, curriculum, regulations and activities. You need to encourage parents to show commitment to education by attending, PTA meetings, open houses, student concerts, and other school functions.

As the principal, it is up to you to make parent involvement a school priority. All major studies have shown that parent involvement in education is one of the keys to quality education. The National PTA has adopted the National Standards for Family School Partnerships. By following these guidelines, the parents, the PTA and the principal can set the tone and encourage parental involvement.

## **National Standards for Family School Partnerships**

1. **Welcoming all Families into the School Community** –Families are active participates in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued and connected to each other, to school staff and to what students are learning and doing in class.
2. **Communicating Effectively** –Families and school staffs engage in regular two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.
3. **Supporting Student Success** –Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support student learning and healthy development both at home and at school and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.
4. **Speaking Up for Every Child** – Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.
5. **Sharing Power** – Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that effect children and families and together inform, influence and create policies practices and programs.
6. **Collaborating with Community** – Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families and staff to expand learning opportunities, community service and civic participation.

## **The Principal and the PTA as Partners**

The principal and the PTA must not only understand their respective responsibilities, but each other's. They must set goals and work cooperatively to achieve them. They must respect each other's opinion, not expect automatic approval from each other and not withdraw support if opinions differ. As partners, it means reaching out to all parents and school staffs to help all children and youth reach their potential.

## **PTA's Rights and Responsibilities**

The National PTA Board of Directors has stated that all PTAs have certain organizational rights as follows:

- To function as an independent, nonpartisan child advocacy group.
- To seek enactment of policies and practices that protects children and youth.
- To participate within school board policy in the setting of school goals and assist in the review of teaching material.
- To participate in making decisions affecting policies, rules and regulations.
- To meet with appropriate school officials to discuss matters of mutual concern affecting children.

- National PTA believes that all PTAs have the responsibility to do the following:
- To protect access to quality education for all children.
- To seek information on policies, curricula, and laws that affect children.
- To share accurate information with members and the school community.
- To know, help and interact with teachers and administrators.
- To accept responsibilities willingly to assure that the PTA is strong and active.
- To work both within PTA and the school in a constructive manner, maintaining respect for democratic procedures and tolerance for the diversity of opinions.
- To work in partnership with school professionals to determine appropriate programs and services.

PTAs are not supporting organizations, clubs or booster groups for any school. They are separate legal entities which further the PTA mission of providing parents and families with a powerful voice to speak on behalf of children. PTAs work in harmony with school personnel, but they are not part of any school and are not subject to direction or control in any manner by school administration. (See appendix for full disclosure)

### **The Principal and the PTA Board of Directors**

The bylaws of each PTA designate the principal as a member of the Board of Directors. (The principal must be a member of the PTA.) As a member of the Board of Directors, the principal should provide a report on school issues and activities. The principal has one vote, as does each member of the board. The principal and other members of the board need to have a good working relationship; however, decision making authority regarding the PTA lies entirely with the PTA membership. Principals need to work with their boards to set goals and work toward achieving them. The principal should:

- Be an active member and encourage teachers to participate.
- Help the PTA keep its primary focus on education rather than fund raising.
- Work together with the PTA to solve problems and set goals that will benefit all students and staff.
- Encourage the PTA board to plan events that provide children's well-being, home-school cooperation and community relationships.
- Keep parents informed on current issues in education
- Encourage constructive discussion with parents that build confidence in the school's leadership and strengthen partnerships.
- Help recognize the efforts of volunteers.

## **The Principal and the PTA President**

The parents and the children of a school benefit immensely when the relationship between the Principal and the President of the PTA is constructed on a solid foundation of trust, mutual respect, and open communication. Discuss concerns openly and honestly.

Stay open minded on issues important to the PTA. Support advocacy that PTA is fostering for the benefit of children or express your opinions to the president and find a happy medium on issues that may cause conflict between your respective offices. Encourage teachers and your staff members to become members of the PTA and to attend PTA functions and meetings. Let you staff know that the PTA is a working part of the school team and that the President of the PTA is working hand in hand with supporting and strengthening the education and welfare of the children. Invite the PTA to participate on school committees. Principals should have a goal of including at least one parent on each school committee.

Although schedules are very busy, it is suggested that the principal and president meet monthly to evaluate goals, achievements and concerns. The principal should feel comfortable bringing problems and concerns to the PTA for resolutions. Open communication strengthens the relationship. Regular attendance at PTA board and general membership meetings is another way to ensure open communication with the PTA and its members. It will also provide the principal with opportunities for input into the decisions being made by the PTA. The principal, as a member of the board of directors, should have input into the construction of the coming year's calendar. The PTA president should consult with the principal to ensure that there are no scheduling conflicts that would inhibit regular instruction periods or conflict with school wide testing. Any correspondence sent to the membership by the PTA should be given to the principal as a courtesy. The Principal shall not stop any correspondence from reaching the membership unless it is felt to be detrimental to the school and/or school community. It is important that the principal be aware of information being disseminated to the general membership. In that way, the principal is able to direct any questions or concerns to the appropriate person. All PTA correspondence, flyers, newsletters and information should contain the name of the PTA somewhere on the correspondence, along with the appropriate contact person's name and contact information.

## **The Principal and the PTA Budget**

The budget is a plan that expresses the goals and objectives of the PTA in terms of income and expense. An effective budget requires the PTA to determine both the ends, or the results being sought, and the specific means to be used to achieve those ends or results. The Maryland PTA recommends that the budget be developed during the planning period for new officers, usually in the summer, and be approved by the members at the first general meeting of the school year. A budget committee usually has the responsibility for developing the budget for the PTA. It is suggested that the committee consist of an odd number of members to preclude tie votes on any issue that may be debatable. This committee is chaired by the PTA Treasurer and should include other PTA members who have knowledge of what has occurred in the past and what

future plans are appropriate for the PTA. The principal may, serve on the budget committee to provide input and suggestions, but it is not mandatory. It is suggested that the principal have input into the process by means of suggestions, observations, and sharing the educational goals for the coming year so that goals and activities planned by the PTA do not conflict but instead compliment the educational direction.

Remember, the primary focus of PTA should be the PTA Purposes, not fund raising. PTAs may raise funds to meet their budgets, but they should be certain that they are raising funds for appropriate PTA expenditures. When planning the year's activities, PTA should use the 3-to-1 rule. For every fund raising activity, there should be a least three non-fund-raising projects aimed at helping parents or children, or advocating for school improvement. Fund raising activities should not take away from instructional time. One well planned, annual fund raising project will usually raise whatever funds are needed to finance the year's activities. If the fund raising event is to reflect the high principles of the association, it should have educational, social or recreational value in itself. Be sure you are spending as much time lobbying your public officials to fund school supplies as you are spending time fundraising.

*“The real working capital of the PTA lies not in the treasury, but in its members -- in their energy, their resourcefulness, and their determination to advance the well-being of children and youth”.*

National PTA Quick Reference Guide Money Matters

After the budget has been drafted, it should be presented by the budget committee chair to the PTA board of directors for consideration and then to the PTA membership for approval. This presentation is made during the association's first general membership meeting where a quorum is determined and present. A majority vote of the members present and voting is required for adoption. The first general membership meeting of the PTA is usually in conjunction with the schools Back to School Night program. It is important for the principal and the president to work together on the Back to School Night agenda in order to schedule adequate time for the PTA to present the budget to the membership for approval.

Because the PTA is a private association, PTA funds are private monies and must be kept separate from school funds. PTA funds should only be deposited into the PTA account. School, school principals, teachers' and school organizations' funds are public monies and should never be deposited into a PTA account. Only those expenses that have been pre-approved by the general membership or included in the budget as a line item are eligible for reimbursement. A check request, with receipts attached, should be prepared for each check to be written. These records will then be available to assist the financial review committee in the completion of its work at the end of the PTA fiscal year.

We hope you find this material useful. Please know that if you have any questions or need additional information you may contact our office at 410-760-6221 or 1-800-707-7972. We may also be reached via e-mail at [office@mdpta.org](mailto:office@mdpta.org).