

# PTA Principal Handbook



## A GUIDE TO KNOWING ABOUT AND WORKING WITH YOUR PTA

Teamwork has become the model for success in business and industry and often spells success in education as well. When the principal and parents work together they can lead the way to success for all students and just as the parents partner with the principal, so does the PTA.

What does it mean for the PTA and the principal to work as partners?

It means that each understands his or her responsibilities and the other's. It means setting goals and working cooperatively to achieve them. It means respecting each other's opinion, not expecting automatic approval from the other and not withdrawing support if opinions differ. It means reaching out to all families and school staff to help our children and youth reach their potential. After all, teamwork is the key to success and it begins at the local school with a partnership between the principal, parents and PTA.

The principal is the educational leader and spokesman 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, the morale of the staff, and the degree of concern for students.

Often principals work with PTAs without understanding what the PTA really is. Sometimes, principals learn the role from other principals, the PTA leadership itself or by guessing their role. The intention of this document is to define the role and mission of the PTA, increase the understanding of the partnership which exists between the PTA and the principal and, ultimately, strengthen the partnership for the total school community.



# WHAT EXACTLY IS THE PTA?

The PTA is a trademarked name that stands for "Parent Teacher Association." The National PTA is the largest and oldest volunteer child advocacy organization in the United States. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose primary role is to advocate for all children. The PTA consists of a network of millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. All officers and board members, whether national, state or local unit, are unpaid volunteers. All members speak with a unified voice on behalf of all children as highlighted by the PTA tagline: everychild.onevoice. We pride ourselves on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education.

Each school PTA (local unit PTA) is a self-governing unit, chartered by the Florida PTA and part of the National PTA. Local unit PTAs are governed by the bylaws of their organization and may not act in any manner inconsistent with the Florida PTA and the National PTA. Each local unit elects its officers, controls its local budget and is responsible to update and amend their bylaws when necessary. The National PTA and all of its constituent PTAs exist to fulfill the PTA mission and purposes. NOTE: PTSA refers to those middle and/or high schools that recognize students as members. For the sake of this document, the governing body shall be referred to as PTA.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL UNIT PTA**

Each local unit PTA consists of three levels: Executive Committee, Executive Board and General Membership. All levels of membership require individuals to be current on their dues.

The principal or his/her designee is a member of the Executive Board (PTA officers, committee chairs and principal). The executive committee and the executive board are the leadership decision-making bodies of the local unit. The principal and the PTA work together toward a mutual benefit for the school, communication being the key to the unit's success. The principal has one vote on the executive board, **if** they are a member of the PTA. The following section provides background information on each of these levels.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

As outlined in our bylaws, The Executive Committee consists of:

- Elected officers of the PTA (a committee consists of a minimum of president, secretary and treasurer)

The Executive Committee appoints the other members of the Executive Board. The main difference between the Executive Committee and the Executive Board is that officers of the executive committee are elected by the General Membership.

## **What are the duties of the Executive Committee?**

- Approve chairpersons and members of the standing committees
- Schedule board and association meetings
- Approve routine bills within the limits of the budget

- Conduct the business of the PTA between Executive Board meetings
- Develop association goals for presentation to the Executive Board and General Membership for approval
- Make a report of the Executive Committee action items at each board meeting

An Executive Committee meeting is a meeting of the PTA officers. Dates of these meetings should be established at the beginning of the school year and are set by the PTA President. Should there be a need for a called meeting, the PTA Executive Committee, or by majority vote of the Executive Board as outlined in the bylaws, can call a special meeting. The Executive Committee meets to set goals, make decisions and/or recommendations to submit to the Executive Board for approval.

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The Executive Board:

- Elected officers of the association
- Chairpersons of standing committees (appointed) \*
- Principal of the school or appointed representative
- If constituted as a PTSA, the board shall include at least one student

\*Each Local Unit PTA selects the committees needed at their school. From time-to-time other special committees will be formed for specific functions and for limited time periods, such as an audit, nominating or special event committee.

In accordance with the Florida PTA bylaws, the principal is a member of the Executive Board. The principal's ideas and actions can play a significant role in setting the tone and shaping the culture for the entire school. It is partly through the principal's support, motivation and leadership that a school community can promote strong parent-school-community partnerships. The principal should also be an active participant at the general PTA meetings. By modeling the expectations and by being actively engaged in this vital partnership, parents, staff and community will come to expect total participation in the school to promote student achievement and a healthy, positive school climate.

Principals should make sure they are scheduling regular meetings with their president and/or Board so that they remain informed regarding PTA activities, fundraisers, events, etc.

### **What are the duties of the Executive Board?**

- Transact necessary business in the intervals between association meetings and such other business as may be referred to it by the association
- Create or dissolve standing or special committees
- Approve the plans of work of the standing committees
- Present a report at the regular meetings of the association
- Select an auditor or an auditing committee to audit the treasurer's books
- Prepare and submit a budget for the fiscal year to the association for adoption
- Approve routine bills within the limits of the budget
- Fill all vacancies in office

## **GENERAL MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL UNIT PTA**

PTA membership dues are very low, and can differ from school to school. All PTAs are required to remit dues to the State of Florida PTA, Hillsborough County PTA, and the National PTA. The dues are as follows:

- \$2.25 to the National PTA
- \$1.25 to the Florida PTA
- \$.20 per member to Hillsborough County Council PTA

In return, local units receive materials, training, access to programs, grants, and awards. Additionally, members have the knowledge that PTA representatives from across the country are going before Congress, our state legislatures, and local school boards to fight, not only for adequate funding of our schools, but for reasonable and realistic (not to mention funded) mandates for education staff.

### **Who can be a member?**

Members can include parents, the entire school staff (including administrators), businesses, neighbors and anyone who believes in the PTA mission and purposes. The general membership is all individuals who have paid dues to the local unit for the current membership year. A member does not have to have a child attending the school to be a PTA member. The following are some of the benefits of being a PTA member:

- Can participate in all PTA/PTSA meetings
- Have a voice and vote at local, state and National PTA meetings
- Are eligible to serve as an officer of a PTA
- Maintain membership in Florida PTA and National PTA
- Are privy to informed and trained leadership
- Have a unified voice to influence legislation affecting children and youth
- Have the opportunity to work for the education, health, safety and welfare of children and youth

## **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

A general membership meeting consists of all PTA members who come together to conduct PTA business and all PTA members are encouraged to attend these meetings. The general membership meets to hear recommendations from the unit's PTA leadership and will then give their approval or disapproval of the purposed recommendations. As an important example, the PTA budget must be approved by the membership before any money can be spent. To improve membership attendance, it is recommended that the PTA sponsor an event or evening held in conjunction with the school. Only individuals who are PTA members have voting privileges at the general meeting.

The number and months of the general meetings are outlined in the bylaws of the local unit. The Florida PTA requires a minimum of three general meetings per year per bylaws (approve budget/elect nominating committee/elect officers).

## **HOW TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR PTA**

PTA boards typically meet over the summer to form a plan of action for the upcoming school year. That plan should include what programs and services the PTA will provide its students, how much money it will take to support that plan and how to raise those funds. With school district dollars dwindling, many principals look to the PTA to cover shortfalls in their budgets. While PTAs want to do everything they can for their children and their school, there are legal limitations to what a PTA can and cannot fund. The national PTA has issued guidelines to help clarify the lines that have become blurred as to the vision, mission and purpose we follow and how PTA funds should be used.

### **PTA VISION AND MISSION**

PTA's vision is making every child's potential a reality. The PTA's mission is to be:

- 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.

### **THE PTAs PURPOSE IS:**

- 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.

### **BASIC PTA DO's AND DON'Ts**

PTAs are not a supporting organization for the schools where they hold their meetings. Supporting organizations often contract directly with school districts to act on behalf of the schools and are subject to school oversight and approvals for such items as their budgets. Teachers or members of the school system holding office in local units may not officially represent the school system on the PTA's board. Such an arrangement comprises a conflict of interest and will be used to demonstrate that the local unit is acting as a supporting organization. Staff are permitted to be on the board of a PTA but district policy prohibits staff who handle district funds from also handling PTA funds.

### **What can your PTA Do?**

The basic premise to remember here is that the PTA funds those needs that provide an impact to the greatest number of students possible. Some examples include:

- PTA funds may cover the cost of classroom or grade level educational field trips.
- PTA funds may cover educational assembly speakers.

- PTA funds must be allocated to educational activities, projects, programs, etc., that are in-line with mission and benefit the entire “charitable class”
  - PTAs cannot allocate funds for one grade level; they must allocate for ALL grade levels.
  - While different grade levels have different needs, it is recommended that a separate group outside the PTA come together to raise funds to support a subset of students and activities that are not aligned with the purposes of the PTA
    - Funds raised by this group cannot be deposited into the PTAs bank account and the PTAs insurance and sales tax exemption certificate cannot be used.
- PTA funds may cover classroom enhancement via teacher requests. One note: if an item is purchased, like headsets or software so kids can learn a second language, those materials do not belong to the teacher, but to the classroom. The items stay in the classroom if the teacher transfers, retires, or leaves the school for any reason.
- There is a gray area in playgrounds, sunshades and water fountains. PTAs are discouraged from purchasing playground, sunshades and water fountains because it is not the duty of the PTA to provide things that are the responsibility of the school district. Instead, PTAs should advocate to the school district and the community to provide these items when needed.

The very basic rule is that if the school district typically funds something, the PTA should not.

### **What can your PTA Can NOT Do?**

The basic premise to remember is this: PTAs are not to replace, but to supplement.

- PTA funds should not be used to purchase personal gifts, equipment for staff lounges and lunchrooms or furnishings for principals' offices. (Personal gifts include, but are not limited to, baby showers, bereavements, weddings, or birthdays.)
- PTA funds should not be spent on textbooks, office supplies, maintenance or school renovations or additions. This can, however, also be a gray area
- PTAs are not an additional funding resource for goods, services, and payroll for public schools. School funds should be supplied by governmental entities. PTAs advocate for the adequate funding of schools from governmental sources. They do not replace funds not supplied by governments
- PTAs are not to pay bills handed over by the principal of the school. If the membership agreed to a purchase using PTA funds, the check must be written to the school for the school to purchase. PTAs should request receipts for these funds

Remember, local unit PTAs exist to provide enrichment for their children, school, and local community and to advocate for children and are not intended to be solely fundraising organizations for their schools.

### **HANDLING OF PTA FUNDS**

This is not meant to be a complete list, just the basics.

- PTA funds must be deposited into the PTA's account as soon as possible following an event or fundraiser. No individual PTA member may ever take PTA funds home with them
- At least two members must count money
- PTAs must have two signatures on every check
- Have the bank statement reviewed and signed by a non-check signer at each meeting

- Signers of PTA accounts cannot have disbursement authority over school/school district funds.
- PTA funds may NEVER be deposited into a school or district account or school safe. PTAs are stewards of charitable dollars and as such, each PTA must be able to directly track all of their expenditures. This cannot be done if PTA funds are deposited into a school's general account
- Checks may NEVER be written to a principal or a teacher without express advance approval of the membership and proper receipts, etc.

## **THE PRINCIPAL/PTA CLIFFNOTES**

The principal's role is to make parent involvement a school priority and create an environment that welcomes parents to the school thus building a strong home-school connection. The PTA serves as your partner to help achieve this objective. As a member of the Executive Board, you need to attend all Executive Board meetings which will ensure your administration and the PTA are continuously discussing plans together and working to create a positive partnership.

### **Your PTA Is . . .**

- A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit under the umbrella of Hillsborough County Council PTA, the Florida PTA, and the National PTA
- An autonomous organization within your school and community
- Your PTA's EIN number may not be used for purposes other than projects under the control of your PTA's officers
- Your PTA's EIN number may only be used with approval by the Board and all signatures for documents need to come from an officer

### **Your PTA Board Is . . .**

- Responsible for the day-to-day management of your PTA
- Responsible for the finances of your PTA
- Elected by your PTA membership
- Responsible for appointing committee chairs
- Responsible for communicating with members, families, teachers, and staff.
- Responsible for opening all PTA addressed mail sent to the school

### **Only Your PTA Membership Can . . .**

- Approve and/or amend your PTA's budget
- Approve PTA sponsored activities
- Approve changes to your PTA's bylaws
- Vote to support or oppose ballot initiatives (NEVER candidates)

Each of these requires a vote of the membership and not just a vote of the board or executive committee.

## **Your PTA Must . . .**

- Have a president, treasurer, and secretary to remain operational.
- Ensure no school community communication with regard to the PTA is sent without the knowledge and consent of the PTA's president.
- Remain in good standing with per the requirements of the IRS, Hillsborough County PTA, Florida PTA and National PTA. This requires:
  - 1) A yearly officers' list,
  - 2) Financial review completed no later than August 31<sup>st</sup>,
  - 3) Paid insurance,
  - 4) IRS 990 or 990EZ,
  - 5) Membership reports and paid membership dues (\$3.50 per member) by October 1 and monthly thereafter as new memberships come in,
  - 6) Updated bylaws (every three years),
- Have two signatures on ALL checks,
- Have the bank statement reviewed and signed by a non-check signer and submit a financial report at regular meetings.

Forms and more information may be found on [www.hccptapta.org](http://www.hccptapta.org). Failure to remain in good standing may mean disqualification from programs, ineligibility to receive awards and the inability to book and register for events through Facilitron.

If a PTA is not in good standing, neither the local unit nor students attending the PTA's school are eligible to receive awards and recognition given by Florida PTA (e.g., membership awards, postsecondary scholarships, etc.) or participate in Reflections. Principals should work with the PTA Executive Committee to ensure all deadlines are met

## **PRINCIPAL AND PTA PRESIDENT WORKING TOGETHER**

The principal and the PTA president represent two important groups in the school: staff and families. Here are some suggestions for nurturing this important partnership.

- Believe in and support PTA
- Meet often to discuss issues, review plans for events and keep each other informed on school programs, problems and needs
- Work out problems or misunderstandings in a direct honest way, keep an open mind, listen to each other and assume positive intentions.
- Attend PTA meetings, including executive committee meetings
- Cooperate with the PTA in the use of school facilities
- Make the PTA feel welcome and a part of the school
- Be a part of the assessment of the PTA programs and activities of the previous year. Help your PTA to identify strengths and weaknesses before developing a plan for the upcoming year.
- Assist the PTA in setting its goals and objectives for the upcoming year, aligning all programs and activities to support the school plan.
- Work with PTA leaders to establish the criteria for programs, events and/or fundraising activities. Help to ensure these activities support increased student achievement and align with the PTA goals and objectives as well as the school plan.

- After each fundraising event, ensure the PTA clearly communicates to the school community what the funds purchased and how the purchase supports student achievement. Keep the primary goal of PTA on education and advocating for students rather than fundraising. The goal is to benefit ALL students.
- Communicate the next three projects (givebacks) that are not fundraisers that are designed to help parents, advocate for students or support the school's plan for student achievement. Each fundraising event requires 3 giveback events.
- Work with PTA to design a plan to educate parents on critical issues and to increase parent involvement in the total school program.
- Encourage teachers to join the PTA, help with program planning, and participate in the activities
- Stress the importance to teachers of disseminating timely PTA notices.

## **NATIONAL PTA SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE**

Ensure your PTA is enrolled <https://www.pta.org/home/programs/National-PTA-School-of-Excellence> by October 15th.

By enrolling in this program, your PTA and school administrators are making a year-long commitment in identifying and implementing an action plan for school improvement based on the PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and Transformative Family Engagement.

Those that exhibit improvement are honored as National PTA Schools of Excellence, a distinction that spans two years. Honorees receive celebration tools, automatic consideration for the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Award and a \$2,000 grant for their school. PTAs are encouraged to renew their designation each year, or every other year, to continue to build on their momentum.

Your School of Excellence designation will help attract new, action-oriented PTA members who want to focus on the issues that affect our children the most and being a National PTA School of Excellence will open the door to other honors and opportunities for your school.

## **NATIONAL PTA REFLECTIONS PROGRAM**

[https://www.hccptaptsa.org/reflections\\_1](https://www.hccptaptsa.org/reflections_1)

The goal of PTA's arts in education programming is to be a resource for PTA leaders in partnering with schools to provide opportunities for all students to explore and be involved in the arts.

The arts, and the National PTA Reflections program, support student success and serve as a valuable tool for building strong partnerships in your school community. When PTAs and schools work together to support arts education, they:

- Encourage all students—despite individual challenges—to explore ideas, express their individuality and support their peers in a positive way,
- Provide all students with an academic advantage by increasing student engagement and teacher effectiveness which leads to increased school attendance rates and social connectedness among students, and
- Enhance family engagement by connecting families and schools to one another and to their communities

Schools and PTAs committed to quality learning in the arts can identify opportunities together for families to take an active role in support of arts education.

The Reflections program is run through local PTAs in good standing and allows students in grades K-12 to enter pieces in: Visual Arts, Photography, Literature, Film Production, Dance Choreography, and Music Composition

## **YOUR PTA, TRAININGS, AND CONFERENCES**

Local unit PTA officers and members are encouraged to attend PTA trainings and conferences. Paying to attend PTA conferences and events, as outlined in PTA standing rules, is considered an acceptable use of PTA funds. Trainings and conferences help your PTA develop strong leadership and ensure your PTA is operating correctly. They also allow your PTA the opportunity to network with other schools and serve to inspire and energize our PTA leaders. Please encourage your PTA's officers to attend these events!

- Hillsborough County Council PTA provides trainings and events for PTA leaders and members. Hillsborough County Council PTA events are low cost or no cost and designed to train both officers and members. Officers are highly encouraged to attend trainings and events. Hillsborough County Council PTA trainings and events can be found at [www.hccptapta.org](http://www.hccptapta.org)
- The Florida PTA provides an annual convention where training is available. There is a cost to attend the convention. Florida PTA events and trainings can be found at [www.floridapta.org](http://www.floridapta.org).
- The National PTA provides online resource guides and e-learning courses to PTA leaders and members. Those resources can be found at [www.ptakit.org](http://www.ptakit.org).

In closing, you know that PTAs do not want to disappoint you or say "no" to any teacher requests; however, there is a reality to be dealt with. You can help PTAs avoid uncomfortable situations, lawsuits, and possible revocation of their non-profit status by not pressuring PTA leaders to bend the rules. It is also helpful for all educational funding requests to go through one person, either the principal or a principal-appointee. We all want the best for our children. Let's concentrate on what PTAs can do for our schools instead of what they cannot.

You can also help by being a champion for your PTA. Please encourage teachers to support and participate in the PTA and its functions. You too! Families and students love to see teachers and principals at events. We take the "T" in PTA very seriously. Together we will enrich every child's educational experience.

Most importantly, Hillsborough County PTA thanks you for your collaboration and support of the work we do for all of our children!