

CONVENTION 2015

California State PTA - Report of the Association

Colleen A. R. You

**Engage, Educate, Energize!
Connect families and schools!
Support student success!**

When it comes to positively impacting the lives of all children and families – California State PTA is the best. We have indeed been busy this past year. We've taken on many tasks, just as you have in your schools, so how do we stay focused on what matters?

Lately, I've been thinking about four agreements that resonate in my life and, I believe, in PTA life. Because face it, if you're in PTA, you know what I'm talking about when I say "PTA life." More than any other group, our members believe in the work and our mission, and your volunteerism and passion – every day – speaks volumes.

The first agreement that keeps us on track is **being impeccable in our word**, forthright in our **ADVOCACY**. What we say, and how we say it, lend to our high regard, credibility and message.

Whether in our local communities or at the State Capitol, we speak up and speak out about our priorities, invest in effective partnerships, and celebrate successes and share best practices. As California remodels our education system to better serve all students, parent engagement is more important than ever before.

And the role of PTA is more important than ever before!

Speaking up meant we informed, involved and supported our members – **you** - to advocate for the education, health, safety and well-being of all children. PTA Legislation Conferences here in Sacramento enlightened our attendees and inspired them to be the voice for children in the State Capitol.

Sacramento Update keeps our members and advocacy leaders across California informed about what is paramount in importance legislatively. New resources were introduced - the *Advocacy Leadership Guide* and *Advocacy Resource Notebook* - offering step-by-step support to local PTA district and council advocacy leaders. We also continue monthly local advocacy leaders conference calls with the director of legislation to strengthen relationships and provide a forum for sharing information and answering pressing advocacy leadership questions.

We sponsored two televised candidates' forums offering voters information about candidates running for California's Superintendent of Public Instruction. State PTA advocates visited every state senator and assembly member this year familiarizing them with our advocacy goals. Our reach extended from there, to the State Board of Education, to the halls of Congress in Washington, D.C.

We have engaged in extensive, association-wide efforts to inform parents about how to be active participants and leaders in formulating their school district's Local Control and Accountability Plan in the wake of the new Local Control Funding Formula. And I'm proud to announce: **National PTA recognized California State PTA as having 2015's best state advocacy achievement!**

In addition, State PTA advocates collaborated with education coalition members, and allies in the arts, academic standards and assessment, civics education, school attendance, mental health, early education, foster children and more to ensure that parents' perspective was part of every discussion.

The California State PTA helped to pass legislation in 2014 that strengthened child abuse reporting in schools; put more emphasis on computer science in high school curricula; protected the privacy of students' information in schools; increased safety requirements for day care programs; and that limited full-contact athletic practices to protect against the danger of concussion. And that is just a sampling!

Currently, California State PTA is co-sponsoring legislation (SB 636) to support a program that provides for the basic material needs of foster children and youth, and a bill (AB 80) supporting the goals of the federal *My Brother's Keeper* initiative to improve opportunities and life outcomes for boys and young men of color.

The second agreement that kept me on track – and this is a hard one – is **don't take things personally**. How does that relate to PTA, you may ask? Well, if we are focused on **LEADERSHIP** – paying it forward – and engaging those around us to inspire them and be relevant, that allows us to hone in on what really matters, our children and families.

Expanding outreach, awareness and training on why family engagement in schools in particular matters for student success continued to be a high priority this year, and we devised ways to make it happen.

We developed and launched new initiatives and partnerships such as the PTA and California Association of African-American Superintendents and Administrators Leadership Equity Institute, the California Department of Education Parent Engagement Project, and the PTA-Univision Spanish-language Parent Engagement Events to empower our Spanish-speaking families to get engaged.

We expanded our advocacy efforts with Allied Agencies - such as Early Edge California, First5 California, Head Start, California Association of Bilingual Educators and the California Department of Education Title 1 Office - to address issues of access and equity, especially for our youngest learners in preschool and students of color.

Our expanded School Smarts Parent Engagement Program has an updated curriculum and new fee-for-service model. **School Smarts** is now in more than 80 schools across 20 school districts, and 1,550 parents are projected to graduate from the program this school year. That makes more than 4,500 School Smarts parent graduates since the program's

inception in 2010 as a pilot in four school districts. We were the only family engagement program to present at the prestigious Grant Makers in Education forum in Florida.

School Smarts makes a positive impact to foster parent engagement in schools, develop future leaders and to encourage parents to advocate for a complete education that includes the arts.

I could never express the true impact this program has, so you should hear it directly from one of our parent graduates. WATCH: <https://youtu.be/YmU8D5PQSxg>

Stellar new resources, such as the PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide, in partnership with National PTA, were introduced to grow family engagement in schools and as a framework for LCFF/LCAPs

We widened opportunities to develop leadership capacity and promote California State PTA with representatives participating in a variety of conferences including National PTAs Male Engagement Conference, California Department of Education Title 1 Conference, California Association of African-American Superintendents and Administrators Annual Round Up and Conference, California Association of Bilingual Educators Conferences, Center for Leadership, Equity and Research (CLEAR) Conference and both the pre-school and K-12 Water Cooler Conferences.

Our continued support of our members around the Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control and Accountability Plans included enhanced outreach and training with workshops presented on Family Engagement and LCFF/LCAPs at PTA district trainings, school district trainings and conferences, including this state convention.

Webinars provided information to members about what they can do as we finished up the first year of LCAPs. We developed additional resources for parents including a four-page LCFF-LCAP brochure that is now available in six different languages. We created *LCAP Quick Guides* for each of the eight state priority areas – in English and Spanish -

and partnered in the launch of ED 100. As part of our collaboration with National PTA and Univision, we offered Spanish-language workshops focused on LCFF and LCAP, college and career readiness and understanding California's new state standards. Most recently, we offered webinars on the Smarter Balanced assessments that students are taking this spring.

For the third agreement, we know it's important that we **don't make assumptions – COMMUNICATION is key!** California State PTA is always here to help, support and provide you with useful information.

- **We REFOCUSED AND REALIGNED** PTA communications by implementing a new Strategic Communications Plan that was approved in 2013.
- **WE HAVE A FABULOUS NEW WEBSITE!** Getting the resources and news you need is now easier than ever with the revamped capta.org. We listened to what parents, members and leaders want most: Ease of use, helpful tools and parenting resources are all part of our new streamlined design to help make your experience the best it can be. We also developed a more robust Online Toolkit – available in English and Spanish – with easy keyword navigation.

WE RAMPED UP SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Instagram, (be sure to follow us – and be sure to share your convention experience by using the hashtag #PTA4Kids). We hosted Twitter and Instagram parties for our convention and Legislation Conference. We participated in a Twitter party on student health and achievement with the Dairy Council of California and hosted a Summer Learning Twitter party

WE ALSO ISSUED MONTHLY PUBLICATIONS for members and leaders (such as *PTA Connects* and *Leadership Essentials*), plus specialty publications (such as *Health Tidbits* and *SMARTS*, *Parents for the Arts Network*). We planned eBlasts on important issues and events, and ran marketing campaigns during the back-to-school season featuring Membership Monday eBlasts.

PTA had articles featured in partner publications such as the Association of California Administrators *Leadership* magazine, California Teachers Association *California Educator* magazine, COMCAST newsmakers, and a Take Your Family to School Week podcast focused on the importance of family engagement in schools.

The last agreement that has inspired me and absolutely made me so proud of our association is **always do your best**. We value each and every PTA member – we know how hard you are working locally for kids and families.

The total of volunteer hours in the association are absolutely incredible in the world of non-profits.

We've done our best to try and make things easier for you in your busy lives by making electronic membership cards readily available to all participating districts. We've provided membership trainings during many field services in addition to three webinars. PTA EZ, the online Tax Filing Assistance Center, and ordering awards and merchandise online help you do your best.

Providing resources and guidance to help you with the dues increase adoption and subsequent implementation, assisting PTA officers throughout the state on parliamentary matters and keeping bylaws relevant helps with the work accomplished on a daily basis in our units, councils and districts. More than 1500 sets of bylaws have been promptly reviewed, signed and returned to local associations for adoption, fulfilling this pledge of service provided by the California State PTA.

Our PTA work directs us to agree to be impeccable with our word, not take things personally and focus outside ourselves, communicate, and do our best. I would not have been able to report on these noteworthy accomplishments without the support of our amazing board of directors, board of managers, executive director and PTA staff. It has truly been a team effort, and it's only upon reflection of the year that the magnitude of all we've accomplished starts to sink in.

Thank you all - my PTA family -for the honor of serving as your president.

Thank you to my daughter Heather, son-in-law Martin, and grandson Alex who've supported me afar from Scotland. Thank you to my son Ivan, who, when I'm at meetings, still comes home and says "Where's Mom?" And there are not enough words to express my love and devotion to my forever partner, my husband David, whose unequivocal support and encouragement have meant I was able to do my best for every child and connect families and schools.

The incoming board of directors and officers will continue to educate, engage, and energize the California State PTA, and ensure our relevance well into the future. Thanks again for a great term!