

California State PTA
Los Angeles Convention Center
Friday, May 9, 2014
Report of the Executive Director

We – you, me, all of the PTA members at your school, all the parents and teachers in your community, all of us – **WE** have a crucial responsibility: We are the voice of children in California.

We are the voice that speaks up for all those who don't yet vote, for all those vulnerable children, all those who need an extra champion – and we speak up even when the political winds are sometimes blowing against us.

Often this is called “advocacy,” but truly, more precisely, what we mean by that term is “voice.”

And part of what we must do as an association is make sure that our voice is as **loud and clear** as possible.

Our voice must include as many parents and students from all parts of the state, and all backgrounds and all races and ages and walks of life – because that is what adds depth and power and harmony and impact to the sound we make.

Later tonight, at our special event, you’ll have a chance to meet Chris Mann. He was a finalist on the TV show, “The Voice.” That’s the show where aspiring singers receive coaching to help them strengthen their voices, a show where talents are discovered, encouraged and cultivated – and a show too where ultimately, voting makes a difference

Think about what we do at PTA – in some ways we’re like the show “The Voice.” We help people find their advocacy pitch, their rhythm, their unique phrasing -- we coach them, encourage them, give them tools—so they can learn how to use their voice to help make a difference.

And when you take our 2,000 voices and amplify that by 100,000 more and then a million and then five million, well, that is the power of PTA in America: A loud, clear voice on behalf of ALL kids. Every child, one voice.

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I have one story to share about a mom who recently graduated from our PTA School Smarts program.

Like every parent, this mom, named Isela, wants the best for her children. But, she was not very familiar with the school system; she didn't feel comfortable or confident talking to a teacher or principal at first; she didn't feel like she understood what was expected of her children or even her as a parent in supporting her children's education.

The California State PTA School Smarts Parent Engagement Program changed that.

After Isela graduated from our seven-session program, she said she became more involved with her children – and she connected more with her fellow parents.

She started attending school functions **and she got involved in her local PTA.**

Most of all though, Isela said, “I feel like for the first time, I have a voice!” - And **that** is the positive impact PTA can have on lives.

We are thrilled that Isela's voice has been added to our collective voice, the PTA voice. Especially in this time of the new Local Control Funding Formula, our voice as parents and leaders has never been more vital.

So, please...keep on raising your voice – and keep helping others to find and develop theirs.

When we do, when we all speak up, good things happen for kids.