What you need to know as a new PTA advocacy chair

If you are the new advocacy chair or legislative officer for your PTA, thank you for taking this important position. PTA has a proud history of advocating for programs and legislation that help children be safe, healthy and successful. Now you are a part of that vital mission. If you have never done this job before, you may wonder how to begin. The state legislative process is complex and the issues can be confusing. There is a lot to learn.

Never fear! Fourth District PTA is here to make your job as easy as possible.

Get training! Fourth District PTA Advocacy Training will be held on Friday, September 14. (Details below.) A workshop for beginners will give you the basic information you need. You should also plan to attend Fourth District PTA Advocacy Forums to get important updates on current topics in education and PTA advocacy, presented by expert speakers. (Schedule on page 2.)

Educate yourself! The Advocacy Resource Notebook, packed with important information, will be on sale at the Advocacy Training for $15. (This expense should be reimbursed by your PTA.) The Notebook is also available at the Fourth District PTA office.

There is a wealth of information available online, beginning with the Fourth District and State PTA websites (fourthdistrictpta.org and capta.org). An invaluable resource is Ed100.org, a free online course on California education, broken into brief lessons. Encourage your members to access this course to become informed parents and to win possible prizes for your school.

Stay connected! Sign up to receive this newsletter every month, September through June. Go to fourthdistrictpta.org and sign up under Communications/Publication and Resources. You will be notified every month when the Advocacy Communicator is ready.

Each issue of the newsletter is accompanied by Talking Points. Make copies of the newsletter for your members or send it to them electronically. Make sure Advocacy is on the agenda for your PTA meeting and use the Talking Points to make your report. And just like that, you have completed an important part of your job: informing your members about current advocacy issues.

While you are at fourthdistrictpta.org, sign up for LegLinks. You will receive emails about legislative activities and alerts when action is needed. Often you can complete the action with just a few clicks on the National or State PTA website.

We are here to help! If you have a problem or question contact your council legislative officer, or Vivien Moreno, Fourth District PTA vice president for advocacy, at advocacy@fourthdistrictpta.org.

PTA Advocacy Conference Calls

Get up-to-date information about education issues and bills directly from our California State PTA advocates by participating in conference calls. Calls are scheduled at 7 p.m. on the following dates:

- September 24, 2018
- October 22, 2018
- November 26, 2018
- January 28, 2019
- February 25, 2019
- March 25, 2019
- April 22, 2019
- May 28, 2019

Call-in Directions:
- Conference Dial-In Number: 1 (641) 715-3276
- Participant Access Code: 604265#
- To mute or unmute during the session, press *6.

If you encounter any phone issues like dropped calls or long periods of silence, please hang up and dial (805) 360-1075. This reroutes you to a different port in their system so you can enter the dial-in number directly.


Ed100.org offers an informative blog on current education issues

Ed100.org is a great place to get a free education on how our California school system works. The brief lessons describe student issues, funding, facilities, what is taught in schools, and much more.

In addition to the basic lessons, Ed100 has a blog with updates on advocacy issues. Recent topics include:

- **Five Strategies for Family Engagement in Schools.** Making real change happen in a school system, succinctly expressed in five points.
- **More Money for Schools? No, Not Really.** The budget for education grew. But the costs of pensions and special education grew more, so cut, cut, cut!

PTA supports arts for all children

Research shows that the arts play an important role in human development. Arts education helps students succeed in all academic areas. All students – not just those with special talents – should have the opportunity to express their unique individuality through creating and learning in and through the arts.

For all these reasons, California State PTA is a strong supporter of arts education for all students.

To help parents advocate for the arts in their schools, CAPTA and CreateCA have developed the **Parents’ Guide to the Visual and Performing Arts in California Public Schools.** It provides an overview of what children should learn in dance, music, theatre and the visual arts by the end of each grade level. To obtain a copy of the handbook go to capta.org/resources.

In addition, the CAPTA School Smarts Parent Engagement Program will show you how to make sure that arts education is included in your school’s Local Control and Accountability Plan. You can find this resource at CAPTA.org/programs-events.

- **Flunking Democracy.** America depends on an informed public to engage in issues with intelligence and compassion. Are our schools delivering?
- **Suicide Prevention: The Role of Parents.** Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for teens. Here’s what your school can do to save lives.
- **Are Charter Schools Good or Evil?** It’s a false choice, but the topic has become polarized. What you need to know to have productive conversations.
- **New Rules for Teachers Unions.** Overturning 40 years of precedent, the Supreme Court has ruled that teachers cannot be compelled to pay union fees. Here’s why it matters to teachers, and how it might affect families.

Family engagement bill advances

AB 2878, which would define family engagement in the State Education Code, was approved by both the Assembly and the Senate. It is now in a concurrence process to approve an amendment that was added by the Senate.

AB 2878 is sponsored by California State PTA (CAPTA) and was introduced by Assembly Member Rocky Chávez. Assemblyman Kevin McCarty is a co-author. Seeing this bill passed into law is a top priority for CAPTA.

Parental involvement is one of eight state priorities that a school district must address in the development of its Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). However, the term is not clearly defined and is interpreted differently throughout the state. AB 2878 would create a more specific description of family engagement to guide school districts in developing their LCAPs.

Two candidates for state superintendent

California voters will select a new state superintendent of public education in the November 6 election. Two candidates are running for the office: Tony Thurmond and Marshall Tuck.

You can get information about both of these candidates at EdSource.org. The website offers articles about each of the men, a comparison of their positions on various issues, and a video of a candidate forum sponsored by EdSource.

The state superintendent heads the California Department of Education, which administers and enforces state and federal education laws, provides technical assistance to school districts, and collects, analyzes and disseminates data about the state’s school system. The superintendent has limited authority to set policy, but often serves as an advocate for policy changes.
Talking Points for Legislative Chairs, September 2018

Details are in the September issue of the Advocacy Communicator.

- PTA is all about advocating for children. Fourth District PTA has a lot of resources to help us with advocacy work in our unit/council. There is an Advocacy Training on Friday, September 14. It’s free and open to all PTA members. Who would like to join me?
- The California State PTA advocacy team has conference calls once a month and we all can participate in those too. The first one is on September 24 at 7 p.m. The phone number and directions are in the September Advocacy Communicator.
- Ed100.org is a great online resource to help us learn all about the education system in California. It’s a full course of information divided into short units. We should all work through the course so we understand our schools and earn a chance to win a cash prize for our PTA. In addition to the basic information, Ed100 also has a blog on current education issues. Some of the recent topics are suicide prevention, charter schools, the Supreme Court decision on teacher unions, and why our schools still don’t have enough funding.
- California State PTA believes all students should have access to arts education at every grade level. To help us advocate for that, there is a new booklet on the CAPTA website called Parents’ Guide to the Visual and Performing Arts in California Public Schools.
- For the past year, California State PTA has been working hard to make sure that AB 2878 is passed. This bill, which is sponsored by PTA, would provide a more detailed definition of family engagement in the state’s Education Code, which will help schools to develop their Local Control and Accountability Plans. The bill has been passed by the Assembly and Senate, but another vote is needed to approve the amendments added by the Senate.
- Two people, Tony Thurmond and Marshall Tuck, are running for state superintendent of education. You can get a lot of information about both of them at EdSource.org. This website is also a great place to find basic information about the California school system as well as information and commentary on current education issues.

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