Mid-Year Motivation

Tips & Resources to Help Your PTA Succeed
COMMUNICATIONS BRINGS ALL OF US TOGETHER. At PTA, we use a variety of communication platforms to build our membership. We do it face to face, with the most powerful method – the personal ask. We send emails to past members, print envelopes, text, tweet or whatever works best for our association. We then use all of these channels to advocate for all children and families. And of course, we use them like this, right now, to develop leaders like you.

As a PTA, take a look at the community you serve and use all the ways possible to reach out to your members. For some, this might mean you need to keep the paper newsletter around. But most PTA members don’t want more paper. They want to get their PTA communication electronically. But this does not mean you can make an email newsletter and be done. Younger people are using social media and messaging apps and moving away from email.

Find out what works best for your members and create a combination of messages on a variety of platforms so that you can reach as many members as possible with the right message at the right time.

You can review the Communications section of the Toolkit for best practices and ideas for your own association. Check it out at toolkit.capta.org/communications. And be sure to follow, like and connect with our California State PTA social media pages to stay up-to-date with all things PTA.
Mid-Year Motivation

WHAT GETS YOU MOTIVATED TO SPEND TIME ON PTA? What makes us tell people “yes” time after time and raise our hands to do the last minute Costco run for the carnival? What gets us through what I like to call our mid-year burnout? Does it really exist in PTA?

The answer is yes, it does, and many of us experience it. We get through the beginning of the term with excitement – we do our membership campaigns, fundraisers, programs; we start out with strong association meetings with good attendance. Then we get to November and December and there are maybe five of us at the PTA meeting trying to keep things going.

So how do we reset ourselves and recharge after the winter break? How do we motivate our teams to make sure that we finish our year strong and end up still liking each other?

Here are five ways to motivate yourself and your PTA.

1. **Make sure to take time for yourself.** The holiday season is hectic. Most of us have lots of family events and find ourselves being pulled in several different directions. When you’re feeling overwhelmed, take a break from PTA and make time for yourself. Spend time with your family and turn your phone off, and do whatever it is that helps you relax and feel energized again. I promise – PTA can wait.

2. **Thank the people that support you.** We all have a support system – whether they are your PTA board members, or a good friend that you can always count on, or your family. For me, it’s my husband. I can always count on him and I also have some great friends that I can vent to, have dinner with and just go have fun. Make sure to thank your support system for getting you through your burnout days.

3. **Look at all you have accomplished so far.** It is so easy to be focused on what we haven’t done yet and the never-ending list of to-do’s. Take time to evaluate all you have done. Meet up with your PTA team and list out all that things you have already accomplished this year. Recently, I was able to share a list of everything we had done this year with our own California State PTA Board of Managers, and it felt great to share that with them and take a look back at everything we’ve accomplished.

4. **Plan on coming to convention.** Convention is the number one place that will ensure you end your year strong, and more importantly, you will set your next board up for even more success. Make sure that you are planning on attending, and if you can’t make it to Monterey, make sure you know what your local District PTAs are planning for spring and summer training. The best way to avoid burnout is to always be planning for the future.

5. **Remember why you said yes in the first place.** We all know it wasn’t for the pay. We all make the same amount at PTA – $0.00. We do it because of the children and families we serve. We do it because we want to see the joy on their faces when we provide the programs and activities they deserve to have in their schools. We do it because we know that being part of PTA is being part of something that not only changes the lives of the children in our schools but the lives of those who are not even born yet. This is why we stay motivated–because we must.

**Believe in our children, believe in PTA.**

I believe in you,

Dianna MacDonald
California State PTA President
As we begin a new year, and with the recent 2018 election behind us, we see many aspects of the California public education system evolving for the better. California is making a series of major shifts in public education with one overriding goal: to improve learning so all students can be successful in school, college, career and life.

We know that students are so much more than just test scores. The new California School Dashboard gives parents a bigger picture of student performance by displaying statewide data on graduation rates, suspension rates, school attendance rates, college/career readiness rates and test scores. The Dashboard also includes local information about school climate and conditions, parent involvement and family engagement and basic services.

Equity is a guiding principle. Information for parents and families is broken down by student group (low-income, English learner, foster youth, etc.) to help local communities see gaps and resources to support struggling students. I encourage each of you to take the Dashboard for a “test drive” by going to www.caschooldashboard.org. Share with your local PTA leaders and families!

Winter 2019 is a good time to reach out to your local school site principal to discuss how you can be directly involved in the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the development of your school district’s Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). PTA knows that the local control afforded to local schools and districts will not be successful without direct parent and family engagement. It can be as simple as telling your school principal what you believe is needed under the LCAP to make your school successful. You can also engage at the district level. Check out your school district and school site websites for ways to connect.

California State PTA is part of a diverse coalition of organizations called the Alliance for Continuous Improvement. The Alliance is calling on our new governor Gavin Newsom, new State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond and our new Senate and Assembly members to utilize a new resource called the Education GPS, which serves as a dynamic “roadmap” that describes the significant foundational changes recently made to California’s public school system and also points to eight recommendations to strengthen and improve upon the work already done.

**The Eight Recommendations Are (as Abbreviated):**

- Fully and equitably invest in students
- Continue to build the capacity of educators, schools and districts to ensure all students have access to a broad course of study that promotes critical thinking and deeper learning
- Advance and expand whole-child supports
- Propel efforts to recruit, develop, prepare and retain a diverse and well-supported education workforce
- Expand access to early learning
- Ensure timely and robust data is available from early childhood, K-12 and higher education
- Reinforce the system-wide focus on capacity building, accountability and continuous improvement at all levels of the system
- Evaluate the state’s own performance in fulfilling its crucial responsibilities

You can also view the Education GPS at www.caledgps.org. Much has been accomplished and much is yet to be done. Please know that California State PTA is front and center in this important work on behalf of all children and families!
DO YOU HAVE A PASSION FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE?
Are you looking to spark your creativity and ignite new ideas? Then don’t miss the 2019 California State PTA Annual Convention from May 16-18, 2019 in Monterey where thousands of PTA parent-volunteer advocates and education leaders will showcase the power of the next generation of PTA.

The #NextGenPTA includes:

- Learning opportunities in leadership workshops and table talks
- Tips and resources on issues affecting children and youth
- Dinner and dancing at the statewide PTA dinner (ticketed event)
- Ideas for school programs and fundraisers in the Exhibit Hall
- General sessions to let your voice be heard and guide the future direction of PTA
- Special events such as the STEAM Extreme focusing on science, engineering, technology, arts and math
- And more!

Registration opens in March at www.capta.org
PTA speaks for every child with one voice, and without our members and leaders, we would not be able to do all the amazing things we do. Trying to increase PTA membership and running membership campaigns isn’t just for back-to-school time, it should be a yearlong goal for all PTAs! To help inspire you for a mid-year membership drive, we surveyed the PTAs that increased membership last year and asked what made the biggest difference. This is what we learned.

- 98% had a dedicated membership chair at their PTA
- 99% had supportive principals at their school
- 94% had membership tables set up at events
- 90% sent a dedicated PTA membership letter home with students
- 88% asked as many people as they could to join PTA
- 88% had supportive teachers and staff at their school
- 86% promoted PTA/PTSA with local incentives, prizes and perks
- 74% promoted PTA/PTSA membership in newsletters
- 68% promoted PTA/PTSA membership in online newsletters

TOP 10 TIPS FROM LOCAL LEADERS:

1. **Hold exciting activities and programs at your PTA and make sure you tell your community.** Having a great PTA is the best way to get people to join. They want to support a group that is making a difference for their children.

2. **Promote PTA year round.** Start before school at orientations and parent meetings, continue with membership tables during the first few weeks of school and at back-to-school nights, remind families at the talent show, science fair, multicultural festival and other events. Include a join link or QR code on your fliers, programs and tables.

3. **Make it fun!** Be friendly, active and inclusive. Ask everyone to join. Have contests, incentives and benefits that are welcoming and fun for your entire community.

4. **Go online.** Check out the new e-membership system, powered by TOTEM. Promote join links and make it easy for people to join on their phone or computer.

5. **Have a whole team helping.** It’s much more fun and inclusive, plus you can reach more people. With a team, you can cover more territory and you’re not as likely to burn out after a few weeks.
6. Promote the important work the PTA is doing. Show your community why it’s important for everyone to join and how it benefits the students at your school.

7. Be visible. Be friendly. Be at every event and meeting at the school.

8. Communicate often. Send out a dedicated membership email or letter at the beginning of the school year. Remind families to join in each newsletter, and do a second big membership push in the middle of the school year.

9. Say “thank you.” At each event, orientation, or opportunity – remember to say ‘thank you.’ Thank the volunteers and the members who make it all possible, plus any supporters who may not yet be members.

10. ASK. Ask in person. Ask on social media. Ask electronically. Be ambassadors. Ask everyone! Remember new families, TK and kindergarten families, freshman, military families, families of all languages and cultures.

We are here to help. We have resources in multiple languages, customizable fliers, marketing templates, goal setting worksheets and so much more. View resources and more at www.capta.org/electronic-membership.

ELECTRONIC MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

More than 65,000 PTA members are using the electronic membership system powered by TOTEM. All of our District PTAs and three-quarters of our Council PTAs are using the system. Now is the perfect time for you to get your unit set up or to remind your community to join PTA. If you are looking for a way to jumpstart your mid-year membership and get things lined up for next year, try California State PTAs new electronic membership system.

If you are already using TOTEM, this is the perfect time to send out an email to your school community. Ask everyone to join and include the link to your unique membership portal. With just a few clicks, you’ll have new members and larger voice for your PTA. Consider having the school site administrator send out the link in a newsletter or in a school all-call.

If your PTA is not using e-membership, find out how easy it is to get onboard with TOTEM at no cost to your local PTA. You can do it today! It only takes a few minutes. See how many members you haven’t found and make joining and renewing PTA membership fun and easy. Learn more at www.capta.org/electronic-membership.

This system was designed by local leaders, for local leaders, and with your feedback we continue to work with our partners at TOTEM to improve the system. TOTEM has great features for PTAs:

- Your PTA can accept payments online and provide electronic membership cards quickly and easily
- QR codes and links can be added to newsletters, fliers, posters and more to make joining convenient for all
- Members can join on the weekends, late at night or whenever they want. Membership is always just a click away!
- Accounting reports have been added to make reporting easy
- Your PTA can still accept cash or checks for membership, and those members can be uploaded into the TOTEM system
- Renewal letters will be sent automatically to remind members to join, or let them know their renewal will be activated
- Because funds are transferred automatically to all PTA levels, there are no delays and your membership is received instantaneously. This can be helpful when deadlines are approaching.

The e-membership system is available to every PTA in California and directly deposits dues into unit, council (if in council), district and state bank accounts. That means less work for leaders and fewer delays in membership reporting. The membership list can be generated in a snap and can include join dates and contact information.

If your PTA is not using the system yet, we are happy to help. Email emembership@capta.org if you have any questions, suggestions or success stories.

New membership challenges will be announced in February. Membership Monday emails will be back for a special New Years – Founder’s Day editions. Be sure to watch your email and the California State PTA website for the new membership challenges.
MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS the way our children think, feel, relate to others and behave. Like physical health, mental health can and does evolve throughout life.

Symptoms of mental health conditions are often invisible and can be easy to miss. It may be difficult to distinguish age-appropriate thoughts, feelings and behaviors from those that may be signs for concern and warrant professional intervention.

If you are concerned about your child’s mental health, ask yourself the following questions:

- **INTENSITY** – How intense are your child’s behaviors, thoughts or emotions?
- **FREQUENCY** – How often does your child feel or behave this way?
- **DURATION** – How long do these individual episodes or periods last?
- **FUNCTIONALITY** – How well is your child functioning at home, at school or with friends?

Emotions or behaviors that are more intense, frequent or longer lasting than most other children your child’s age and that are causing difficulties in their daily functioning may be signs for concern and might warrant a discussion with your pediatrician or a mental health professional.

Teach your children that mental health is as important as physical health by modeling that there is nothing wrong with seeking help when there are signs for concern. The earlier you intervene, the more likely your child can receive the help they need and prevent a larger issue down the road.

As parents or guardians, we spend a huge amount of time focusing on our children and our families. But what about ourselves?

So much of what we do physically impacts us mentally, so paying attending to both your physical health and mental health can help you achieve overall wellness. Try to including the following five actions into your daily life to increase and maintain well-being.

**Connect With Those Around You**
Connect with family, friends, colleagues and neighbors. Invest time in developing relationships. These connections will support and enrich you every day.

**Do Something Active**
Turn off the electronics. Step outside – go for a walk, run or bike ride. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Find a few activities you enjoy. Exercise not only benefits your physical health, but can decrease stress, anger and tension, improve sleep and boost self-esteem and confidence. Exercising makes you feel good!

**Be Mindful**
Savor the moment. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Find beauty in the average. Reflecting on your experience will help you appreciate what matters to you.

**Try Something New**
Keep learning. Rediscover on old interest. Sign up for a course on something that interests you. Take on a new responsibility. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving.

**Give of Yourself**
Do something nice for a friend or stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group.

Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.
When you joined PTA, you became an advocate for all kids and for high-quality schools. With a new governor and legislature starting work in Sacramento — and new school board members in most school districts — this is the ideal time to put on your advocate hat!

A great first step in advocacy is to take stock of how well schools are doing, what they can do better and what they need in order to improve. The California School Dashboard, created by the California Department of Education, is the perfect place to start your advocacy efforts. You’ll find it at www.caschooldashboard.org. The Dashboard website provides a wealth of information about how every school and school district in California, and all schools statewide, performed last year based on state priorities.

The information on the Dashboard is divided into three categories: conditions and climate, academic engagement and academic performance. Each provides insights into how schools and kids are doing and should also raise questions you can ask teachers and other school officials.

Under the conditions and climate category, you’ll find information about basics such as facilities, instructional materials and teacher qualifications, plus survey results about how safe and welcoming schools are. You’ll also find a very basic school district measure of parent involvement — but thanks to efforts by California State PTA, the state is working on better guidance for schools in this important priority area.
Recently, our sponsored family engagement bill AB 2878 was signed into law. This bill helps to define authentic family engagement in our schools. It encourages school districts and sites to apply research-based practices, such as welcoming all families into the school community, engaging in effective two-way communication, supporting pupil success and empowering families to advocate for equity and access.

A lot of research indicates that a rich curriculum helps support academic engagement. One of the state priorities is to “provide all students with access to a broad course of study.” That fits with California State PTA’s continued advocacy for arts education. And it’s state law! The bad news is that school districts do not always follow that law.

Starting this year, districts will have to report on course access on the Dashboard, but only for the district as a whole. You can and should insist on detailed information (which districts will have) so you can measure course access for all students in every local school. If kindergarteners aren’t getting science instruction or sixth graders aren’t offered art classes, find out what the plan is for changing that.

On the Dashboard, the numbers that measure academic engagement include:

- High school graduation rates
- The rate of student suspensions
- Chronic absenteeism (students who miss at least 10 percent of the school year)

The reports provide information for all students in a school or district. They also show variations based on student characteristics such as ethnicity, poverty and English learner status. This data can be used to inform LCAP planning to address needs in each school community.

When it comes to academic performance, schools and school districts should have access to a full curriculum that prepares them for college and career, including math, social science, science, the arts, health, physical education, career/technical education and more.

Schools should offer engaging programs and coursework that keeps students in school, as measured in part by attendance and graduation rates.

Schools ought to be continually improving student achievement and outcomes, as measured in multiple ways, such as test scores, English proficiency and college and career preparedness.

Learn more about all eight state priorities at www.capta.org.
districts should effectively implement the content standards the state has adopted in every subject area.

In recent years, those standards have put more emphasis on teaching students to think critically, communicate clearly, use creativity and collaborate with others. Doing that successfully requires big changes in how kids are taught. That’s why the state requires school districts to report on the Dashboard about what they are doing to make sure teachers understand the new standards and are teaching them well.

A major goal of the new standards is to make sure all students are ready for college and career. The state created a special college/career indicator on the Dashboard that will show you how many of last year’s high school seniors left school prepared for college and/or their career.

But perhaps the most visible test of student learning is tests. On the Dashboard right now, you’ll see the results for the state’s 2018 tests in English language arts and mathematics. Once again, the results are broken down by student group. Science test results based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) will take at least another year, as the first set of tests are happening this spring.

Equally important is the question of what schools need in order to improve. For many years, California State PTA has been convinced that one answer to that question is higher funding. One of our key advocacy goals is to “support adequate funding for public education by educating our members and policy makers and advocating for legislation to bring California within the top 10 states in per pupil funding.”

Demand Arts Education for Every Student

NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WHY ARTS EDUCATION IS SO IMPORTANT?


How many of the students in your school and school district have access to the arts? Find out by looking up your school or district on the California Arts Data Project website at www.createca.dreamhosters.com/artsed-dataproject.

Want to join a statewide movement advocating for arts education? Join one of the most impactful public will campaigns for the arts in recent history to demand arts education for all students at www.createca.org.