

# ABC's of Male Involvement

What does your PTA look like? Do men make up half your PTA members? Leaders? Volunteers? If they don't, do you know why? Do you know why men are important to PTA?

Studies show students perform better when BOTH parents are involved in education. Men and women think differently and bring different perspectives to PTA. PTAs are more vibrant and more appealing to all when both men and women help run them.

## A = Ask

*Asking men. Nearly half the men polled said they were not asked to join PTA. As with every "sales pitch," asking for their membership is the strongest tool you have to get men involved in PTA.*

*Understand that sending a form through the "backpack express" or a flier on the PTA table at a school open house is not a very effective "ask." A real "ask" is personal and powerful. Show enthusiasm and draw on your experiences. Don't apologize for asking, and be prepared to say what your PTA is doing to help their children and the school. Most important, make the message meaningful to men.*

## B = Bend

One size does not fit all in meeting the needs of PTA members, particularly men. Unless your unit is brimming with male PTA members, what you are doing is not working. Therefore, it is essential that you bend, that is, be flexible in your actions and thinking.

The top reason men in our survey gave for not joining PTA was time. In fact, general membership surveys PTA does regularly all say that time is the top reason why all survey participants do not join PTA. But what does time have to do with signing up as a member, paying dues, and carrying a membership card? The fact is that most people think that to belong to PTA means they have to volunteer. Joining the PTA is a great way to support children and the school in and of itself.

Men not only want to know if membership equals volunteering, but almost half of the men surveyed said they would volunteer if their roles and expectations were clearly defined. For these survey participants PTA membership and volunteering are not social activities—these men want results.

## C = Communicate

“C” stands for communication—the centerpiece of any effort to attract new members. What needs to be communicated? At every opportunity, communicate the value of PTA, the value of membership, the need for members, and the need for men.

Our survey asked men how to communicate effectively with them. Their #1 answer was male-oriented advertising. It is important to understand that men do not necessarily respond to “parent” as meaning “male” or “dad.” They see it as any parent who is handling the family/school stuff, and often this is the mom. Therefore, communicate to dads (not parents) that they are welcome by addressing letters, announcements, and other communications to “moms and dads.” Highlight opportunities and activities specifically for men.

## What men want

Men told us they want fewer meetings, at convenient times. They want clear agendas, results-oriented meetings, and quick and effective meeting communication. Men prefer bulleted lists and reports, summary points, email communication before and after meetings, and quick updates and reports.

Finally, let moms, dads, and all family members know that the biggest payoff of PTA membership and involvement is the success of their children in school and in life. There is no greater gift children can get than to know that their parents and family care enough about them to get involved.

Additional information is available on the National PTA Website.

