Distance Learning: The 5 Steps Needed for it to be Successful

PTA - A Leader in Challenging Times

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President, California State PTA
CELIA JAFFE

Keep Your Aim True

REINVENTION IS THE BYWORD FOR the coming year in PTA, as it is in so many arenas of life. School leaders and policy makers are designing the 2020-21 school year, and they need the voice of parents/caregivers and families to inform their decisions. Serving as that connection between community and school is a crucial role for PTA.

California State PTA has been a particularly active voice in education policy at the statewide level, from testifying at legislative hearings, to participating in press conferences regarding funding measures, to serving on the School Reopening Task Force with the Superintendent of Public Instruction. As a member of the Education Coalition, PTA regularly communicates with the Governor and legislature. The whole education community is pulling together in the herculean effort to create a viable plan for the next school year.

Safeguarding the health of students and the adults who work with them is the foremost consideration in school opening decisions, but the need for continuation of learning for all students must not be discounted.

The key to reinvention is staying true to our mission but finding new ways to carry it out. I have great confidence in the ingenuity and resilience of PTA leaders, as we all endeavor during a challenging time to positively impact the lives of all children and families.
A Message From

Executive Director, California State PTA
SHERRY SKELLY GRIFFITH

THIS HAS BEEN AN UNPRECEDENTED time for children, parents and families in California, the nation and the world. During these challenging times our personal network of family and friends is even more critical to our social and emotional well-being. PTA is also a source for networking and resources for parents and families. I am pleased to share that despite our state office closure we remain working hard for our members offering new services such as our Resource Library with diverse materials for distance learning, parent networking sessions and training webinars on a variety of topics including closing the digital divide for families. As the largest child advocacy organization in California, we are at the table with our education partners and state policymakers including the State Superintendent and Governor’s office to ensure we make our public education system whole again and to protect the health and welfare of children and families. For more than 120 years, California State PTA has stood by all children and families and we will continue to be there for you during this difficult time. Stay well, be good to yourself and call on us for support.

Sherry S. Griffith

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Home Internet

Only $10 - $23 per month

For a limited time, some providers are offering 2 months free!

You may qualify for affordable Home Internet if you are participating in one of the following programs:

- Child enrolled in the NSLP (National School Lunch Program)
- CalFresh (food stamps) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipient
- Medi-Cal or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient
- Household income under $40,000/year

To determine which Internet provider serves your area, enter your zip code at [www.everyoneon.org/capta](http://www.everyoneon.org/capta).

It will list your choices and you can call the companies in your area.
HOPE THAT EVERYONE IS in good health. Thank you for all of the hard work that was put into your 2019-2020 membership campaigns. Many of you had outstanding years and even more of you were on track to reach your goals before the premature end of the school year. As we gear up for next year, we understand that our local PTAs may have different needs when schools resume.

One of the benefits of belonging to PTA is the support system it offers, and the Membership Services Team is ready to assist you with your 2020-2021 membership campaigns. In the upcoming weeks, we will have a series of webinars and conference calls to help answer many of the questions that you may have, whether it be ways to reach out to potential new members or encouraging our current members to return. Here are a couple of tools to help you get started:

**Member Perks:**

Here is a link to the Summer 2020 Member Perks Flyer. The flyer is available in both English and Spanish and contains some discounts that may be useful during these difficult times. We are also hopeful that many of our partners that were unable to participate for our Summer Member Perks will be returning in time for the next edition of Member Perks, in October 2020.

https://capta.org/join/member-perks/

**TOTEM Pre-registration:**

Starting June 1 at midnight, local PTAs that are on TOTEM will have the ability to start their membership campaign for the 2020-2021 school year. This feature was developed at the request of several units last year that wanted a way to capitalize on pre-registration events being held at their schools, and although we don’t know when we will be meeting again at our schools at least we now have the capability of starting our membership campaigns a month early. If you have any questions, please email us at emembership@capta.org.

More than ever, we really want to focus on the value of PTA this year. If there is something you would like to see from us, please don’t hesitate to contact us at membership@capta.org. Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Michael Morgan

Vice President of Membership Services
THE WAY KIDS ARE LEARNING SCIENCE IS CHANGING AND YOU CAN TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE!

The California State PTA invites you to ignite your curiosity for science by finding opportunities for exploration and discovery during the everyday activities of life.

DISCOVERING NEW THINGS TOGETHER IS EASY!

EXPAND YOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATION AND CURIOSITY BY:

• Asking questions! Lots of them. Why is the sky blue? How do germs spread? What causes the sound of thunder?

• Connecting everyday life back to science: Baking a cake? That’s a chemical reaction! Out on a walk? Spot some flowers growing and experience the magic of photosynthesis!

• Experiment together by mixing homemade slime, making a volcano or polishing pennies.

SCIENCE IS EVERYWHERE AND FOR EVERYONE!

The California State PTA has diverse learning resources to empower all families to bring discovery to the forefront of their child’s science education. From videos, to articles and activities, the California State PTA resource library has something for everyone looking to #DiscoverTogether.

Visit: capta.org/resource-library

#DiscoverTogether
HE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS SHUT down schools, put millions of people out of work and had a huge impact on the health and mental well-being of children and families.

During this time, California State PTA has been hard at work in the advocacy arena keeping our members informed and advocating for the education, health and safety of children.

Our president, Celia Jaffe and executive director, Sherry Griffith were members of the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Re-Opening Schools Task Force representing parents and children. The task force discussed plans and guidelines for how schools might reopen. Using that input, Superintendent Thurmond produced the document “Stronger Together.”

PTA’s VP of Education testified at a panel during an Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2 hearing on the topic of mitigating learning loss during the COVID-19 school closures. She reminded the subcommittee that there are equity gaps in the system in which all students may not have access to adequate technology devices, internet access or a quiet place to learn.

The Legislation Team has been holding monthly webinars filled with information regarding the impact of COVID-19 on our schools, teachers and students as well as information about what state and federal actions are being taken to reduce those impacts. The Legislation Action Committee has been studying bills and meeting remotely in order to take positions on over 50 bills this legislative session.

We have written letters expressing the importance of voter access in the upcoming election; opposition to the Secretary of Education’s proposal for microgrant school vouchers; and our response to the Governor’s May revised budget as part of the broader Education Coalition.

We continue to encourage our members to respond to the 2020 Census, a count of every individual in the United States done every 10 years. The results are used to reappoint the number of seats each state will have in the House of Representatives and in the allocation of $675 billion in federal funds distributed to states to support schools, hospitals, roads, public works and other vital programs.

We encouraged our members to contact their state legislators with feedback on how the Governor’s May revised budget would impact their local schools to help guide the Governor and the Legislature as they finalized the state’s budget by the deadline of June 15th.

We put out a call to action to our PTA members asking them to contact their federal representatives and ask for their support on an additional $200 billion in federal funds for schools in the next COVID-19 relief package. Over 17,136 letters were delivered to our California federal representatives from our members.

Lastly, we call on our members and voters across California to help pass the Schools and Communities First ballot initiative on the November ballot. This would raise about $11.5 billion dollars each year for K-12 schools, community colleges and local communities. These are much needed resources at a time when schools and local communities have been decimated by the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic.
SCHOOLING DURING THE PANDEMIC HAS been a challenge for students, families, educators alike. Providing the special services and supports, that students with Individual Education Plans and ADA, 504 plans need, has posed even greater challenges. How does one accommodate for an auditory processing disability in a model of distance learning based on Google virtual classrooms? How does one provide behavioral support to a student who is now at home being supported by parents whose education, work experience, and knowledge is far from the field of managing behavior? How does one check for understanding when a student relies on routine and predictability to engage?

Despite the seemingly unending stream of questions, there have been organizations, public agencies, and private practitioners who have risen to the challenge to provide education and services in these confusing and trying circumstances. What has arisen, thankfully, along with the awareness of the complexity of the demands of teaching, is the realization that students learn differently and that one size does not fit all. The model of attending the same physical structure, for the same amount of time, following the same schedule, sitting in the same kind of classrooms, with the same rows of desks, etc., in order to learn is now being evaluated in ways that education thought leaders have pondered, but practitioners have not had the opportunity to fully explore. There are families of students with sensory processing disorders, with social communication disorders, with learning and attention disabilities who report strides in academic learning and decrease of anxiety and school refusal behaviors. What has changed for them to cause a decrease in the foundational security in their daily lives to allow for that, and can that be recreated in their education plans moving forward?

I recently spoke with a friend who lived through the HIV/AIDS global epidemic about how it served as a disruptor to immediately and irrevocably raise awareness and foment change regarding acknowledgment and acceptance of the LGBT community. It reminded me of a conversation I had with my son’s middle school principal, when I was the school’s PTA president, who was one of the first administrators to begin talking about restorative justice and standards based grading years ago. Both of those, we discussed, were equity building and more responsive to students with disabilities. We lamented that the changes to education as a whole, and to special education, needed a positive disruptor to bring about necessary change quickly. This pandemic could be that disruptor.

Marilyn Cachola Lucey
Chairperson, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
ART GIVES ALL OF US the power to make meaning. Stories help us connect ideas and see the big picture. Painting, drawing, dancing, singing, give us ways to express ourselves, and relieve stress. Nature helps us connect to the world and discover beauty all around us.

You can make learning engaging, relieve stress, and have fun! Get great ideas for all this and more at Create CA #createathome. You can also find more ideas and information at the new Resource Library at CAPTA.org. Here are some outside links to check out too:

With tools from PBS Learning Media, make your experiences in the time of Coronavirus into art. Learn to write a script and edit a video about you, tell the story of someone else, and make your own memes. Visit: https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/coronavirus-media-storytelling-srl/student-reporting-labs-journalism-curriculum/en/#.Xpj8atNKgWo

Santa Cruz County Arts Learning at Home’s Virtual Classroom brings arts lesson plans, activities, and video tutorials in visual arts, dance, music, and theater from talented artists and art teachers. Visit: https://www.artscouncilsantacruzcountyartsathome.weebly.com

Stay healthy & enjoy your time together! Arts Education Committee
Parents and caregivers, we do everything in our power to protect our children from harm, but the reality of continuing discrimination and injustice makes that impossible for many of our children and families of color. This cannot continue.

California State PTA joins our community, education, and equity partners in seeking concrete actions to address the pattern of institutional discrimination and violence against Black people. We commit to examine our own practices and structures to work towards eliminating implicit bias, racism and inequities. We call on our thousands of local PTAs throughout California to bring to life the principles of inclusion, equity, and diversity. PTA strives to create communities that provide safety, opportunity, and a nurturing environment for all children and families.

We know that our units have been looking for tips to address inequality and bias in our PTAs and on our campuses. Here are a few suggestions from our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee:

- Form a book club to read and discuss Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald
- Take the online bias tests of Harvard’s Project Implicit and have a discussion about your results https://implicit.harvard.edu
- Screen the Bias documentary by Finish Line Features LLC and have a discussion panel
- National PTA has great resources on increasing family engagement and creating a more diverse and inclusive PTA: https://www.pta.org/center-for-family-engagement/in-the-field#diversity
- Audit your visual images in PTA flyers, etc. to make sure you are being representative of your school population and community
- Intentionally bring noted Black/African American speakers to your campus. Make sure you are asking them to speak on topics other than racial justice, too.
- If staff grants are given, stipulate that equity and representation must be a primary driver. For example, with a grant for books, require multiple narratives on any given topic.
- Take a pledge to educate selves and community on race, racism, racial justice
- Do a structural analysis (audit) of your own organization, then make changes in practices and policies to be more inclusive

The Center for Family Engagement from National PTA has a great document called “How to Talk about Race & Injustice in America.”

If you have other suggestions, please share them with us at communications@capta.org and we may share them on our blog or social media.
DISTANCE LEARNING
and THE 5 STEPS NEEDED
for IT TO BE SUCCESSFUL

We have spent much of the spring and summer talking with PTA leaders across the state, learning about both the challenges and opportunities presented by distance learning. We have also worked alongside our Education Coalition partners to secure adequate funding for schools during this challenging time, and we have been included in the school re-opening discussions with State Superintendent Tony Thurmond and the State Board of Education. In June, we partnered with CCEE and hosted three “listening sessions” where we heard from parents from across the state about how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting them and their children. The quotes you see on this page and the next are actual comments from parents who attended those sessions, and demonstrate the wide range of issues and emotions they are dealing with.

“It was challenging at the beginning when school just closed. However, once we got going, Google classroom and teacher’s participation on Zoom helped a lot.”

“Feeling a bit overwhelmed to know what next year will look like.”

“Distance learning has given some time for differentiated instruction (from me) which has been great.”
Based on what we have learned, California State PTA calls for the following five steps to be taken to ensure that our students are equipped for educational success going forward:

1. Clear and frequent communication with students and families is key to successfully implementing any educational plan, be it distance learning, in-person schooling, or a hybrid.

2. If distance learning is to be successful for all children, all students must have access to the internet and computers or tablets, and there needs to be flexibility in timing that works for families with multiple children, adults also working from home, and other hurdles. Getting input ahead of time from local families about these issues is imperative.

3. Protecting the health (both physical and mental) and wellbeing of our students and staff is of prime importance whether schools implement in-person, hybrid or exclusively distance learning.

4. Guidance of health experts such as the Centers for Disease Control, the California Department of Public Health, and county health departments should be part of any plan for schools.

5. The needs of children living in poverty and children with special needs must be effectively addressed. It is not acceptable for any children to miss out on crucial learning opportunities.

"I’m concerned about the disparities that go along with teaching via technology. Some students are getting very little instruction/face time with their teachers. There is inequality across our district, and maybe in other districts too."

"Trying to stay positive and count blessings, but this is a very challenging time."

"My son is actually doing very well with distance learning, but he misses his friends and sports!"
ALIFORNIA STATE PTA HOLDS an annual statewide meeting every year in order to conduct the business of our state organization. During the meeting, our membership gathers to vote on important priorities for the organization, including the Legislation Platform and resolutions. In some years, we also vote for changes in our bylaws, and in alternating years, we hold annual elections for our Board of Director positions.

Normally we conducted the business of the association during our annual convention, but this year we held a “virtual” Statewide Association meeting from June 9-11. As always, we focused on our legislative priorities and issue-based resolutions which provide the authority for California State PTA’s programs and activities.

Prior to the business meeting, registered members were able to participate in legislative and resolutions hearings. At these hearings, members learned more about each of the five resolutions and the Legislation Platform by interacting with the makers of each.

Then, during the business meeting, registered attendees debated and voted on the Legislation Platform and each resolution, which addressed the important issues of vaping, mental health, chronic disease and injury prevention, net zero-emission schools, and evidence-based policies and practices. All the resolutions except Evidence-Based Policies and Practices were adopted.

By providing an opportunity for members to be part of the process and let their voices be heard via online voting, together we helped shape the legislative and advocacy priorities of California State PTA. The Legislation Platform and adopted resolutions help determine the work of the California State PTA commissions for communications, education, family engagement and health & community concerns and ensure that California State PTA and all of its districts, councils and units are able to fulfill our mission. Remember, the “business” of the California State PTA is to positively impact the lives of all children and families.

During these challenging times, our first virtual Statewide Association Meeting was an important way to connect with our members. It is our hope that you see how important the business part of our annual meeting is to ensure PTA’s continued legacy as the oldest and largest volunteer organization advocating on behalf of children and families in the nation.
BUSINESS OF THE ASSOCIATION

California State PTA adopted four resolutions during the general meetings at the 2020 Statewide Association Meeting. These and other adopted resolutions offer official guidance on issues as wide-ranging as school finance, health and safety, community concerns, and more. Resolutions allow the organization to take positions on legislation and to advocate by giving us the authority of the association as a whole. California State PTA also adopted an updated Legislation Platform, which lays the framework for PTA action on legislation.

RESOLUTIONS

**Resolution A:** E-Cigarettes/Vaping, Flavored Tobacco Products and Youth Health (from Palo Alto Council PTA, Sixth District) is about advocating against vaping and flavored tobacco products, and how we can protect our children by sharing information about the dangers of these potentially deadly products.

**Resolution B:** Net Zero Emission Schools (from Cumberland Elementary PTA, Sixth District) is about advocating, planning, and funding a phased plan for Net Zero Emission schools in California.

**Resolution C:** Mental Health Services for Our Children and Youth (from Trabuco Hills High School PTSA, Fourth District) represents the need for proper funding and implementation of mental health services in schools for our children and youth.

**Resolution E:** Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Funding (from Bancroft Middle School PTA, Peralta District) seeks to invest in chronic disease and injury prevention measures.

If your unit, council or district would like to propose a resolution for the 2021 Convention, you can see the process here: downloads.capta.org/res/ResolutionProcedures.pdf.

LEGISLATION PLATFORM

The Legislation Platform is adopted biennially in even-numbered years by annual meeting delegates and defines the areas of interest and scope of the PTA legislation program. Commissions for communications, education, family engagement and health & community concerns study legislation within the framework of the legislation platform and current PTA positions. Click here to view the updated 2020 Legislation Platform: https://capta.org/programs-events/statewide-association-meeting-2020/business-of-the-association/legislation-platform/

The full text and background of each of these resolutions and of the Legislation Platform can be found on the Business of the Association page of the Statewide Association Meeting 2020 section of our website.
Articles appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted in PTA unit, council and district newsletters. Please credit California State PTA.

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The mission of the California State PTA is to positively impact the lives of all children and families.