Positively impacting the lives of all children and families

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Your California State PTA connects families, schools and communities. We are part of the foundation of the public-education system and a trusted messenger to millions of members, parents, families, educators and allied agencies throughout the state. PTA is the nation’s largest volunteer-led child-advocacy association working to drive improvements in the education, health and well-being of all children and families.

Working together, we promote the health and welfare of children and youth in home, school, community and place of worship; raise the standards of home life; secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth; bring into closer relation the home and the school, so that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth; and develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education.

For more information, visit www.capta.org.
I recently watched a video about the differences between for-profit and not-for-profit entities. What struck me was instead of us simply identifying ourselves by a tax designation, we need to say what we are for. The video stated that not-for-profits should start to call themselves “for-impact” associations. PTA is a “for impact” association. We are the organization that has advocated for the rights of all children and families for over 120 years. We teach our members how to run their own “for impact” associations and how to have an active role in their child’s educational career. We have the perseverance needed to continue to create change to benefit the future of tomorrow for our children.

California State PTA sets organizational goals to help us have a laser focus on what we want to achieve. We have set these goals for 2017 – 2019:

**Represent, inform and mobilize members and the public to advocate for the education, health, safety and well-being of all children.** PTA needs all members to join our efforts to advocate and help us secure laws that positively impact the lives of all children and families. PTA works at the federal, state and local level to ensure that there is a focus on the whole child.

**Engage and empower our members and mentor our leaders of tomorrow.** You’re not a leader until you create a leader, who can create another leader. PTA is committed to empower our leaders so that we can bring in new members and mentor them to be the leaders of tomorrow. Our greatest gift as leaders to this association is to ensure that there are great leaders after us.

**Strengthen our voice for all children by increasing membership.** The more members we have, the stronger our voice is for all children and families. PTA members know what is happening in their schools, communities, our state and our nation. When you become a member, you support our efforts to protect and fight for what is right for our children.

**Promote and practice inclusiveness.** Reach out to those who may not attend meetings. Include others in decision-making and share your power as a leader. When we are inclusive, we create a more diverse, more competent, more powerful PTA. We can create systems of change when we reach out to others and show respect and kindness.

**Promote and build family engagement to foster positive outcomes for every child.** PTA was built on this fundamental premise that by building strong families, we have stronger schools. PTA can assist in building a more welcoming environment at our schools that promotes family engagement. You are the key to helping our children of today be prepared for the future of tomorrow.

Thank you for believing in our children and for believing in PTA.

I believe in you,

[Signature]

― Dianna MacDonald

“We are the association that has advocated for the rights of all children and families for over 120 years. We teach our members how to run their own impact associations and how to have an active role in their child’s educational career.”
We all join PTA for different reasons. From the great PTA programs at your school, to the support and best practices developed over years, to the advocacy efforts for all children—joining PTA makes sense.

Parents, teachers and administrators often join to support the great programs put on by the PTA at their local school. Local PTAs can develop and sponsor all kinds of programs to benefit the students at their school. Local PTA programs range from multicultural festivals, talent shows and science fairs to running clubs, art programs and family reading and math nights. Programs developed together by families and school staff support students at the school and increase the family-school connection. Just by joining the PTA, friends and family members send a strong message to the young people in their lives that they value education and are partnering with their school.

“I joined PTA for my kids. I continue to volunteer for all the families I’ve met who want the best for their children. I can’t think of a better way to contribute to my community than by advocating for what’s best for all of our children—just by joining you do that.”

– Carol Green
Vice President for Membership Services
California State PTA

For community leaders and business owners, joining the PTA is a way to support education and family engagement in your community. It’s also a way to encourage community involvement and civic engagement.

School administrators appreciate PTA’s support structure for volunteer leaders and a long history of best practices and financial procedures. They also value the PTA insurance and guidelines for running a non-profit organization.

PTA volunteer leaders gain skills and receive support as they add value to their community.

“I always say PTA changed my life. I was an English language learner and everything was harder for me, but volunteering with PTA gave me...
confidence and taught me how to advocate for my daughter, and I got to be part of big changes,” said Juliana Rontiul, PTA volunteer at Whitman Elementary. “I learned that kids whose parents are involved do better in school and that just put me in it.”

PTA Fights for Your Child’s Education, Safety and Welfare

Beyond all the benefits at your local PTA, you are part of the largest child advocacy association in the country and influence policies and laws locally, statewide and across the nation. PTA fights for education funding. From ensuring adequate public school funding to advocating for a full curriculum and system of continuous improvement, PTA members are making a difference. PTA gives you a “seat at the table” when important decisions are being made. PTA advocates for laws to protect our children. PTA members join together to have a voice for children – together we can do more.

“PTA’s fingerprints are all over the public education framework, from the meals schools provide to students to the way schools communicate with families,” said James Hammond, Superintendent of Ontario-Montclair School District. “PTA’s engagement is critical.”

Only One PTA

There are many parent groups out there, but there is only one PTA. Connecting families, schools and communities for more than 120 years, PTA is the largest children’s advocacy organization in the country.

If you believe in children; if you believe in education; if you care about the health, safety and welfare of your children and the children in your community, you belong in PTA.

Join your local PTA today!
Effective Family Engagement Requires Building Trust

Why is family engagement important? Research shows that students with engaged families:

✔ Earn higher grades and test scores
✔ Enroll in higher-level academic programs
✔ Are promoted on time and earn more credits
✔ Adapt better to school and attend more regularly
✔ Have better social skills and behaviors
✔ Graduate and go on to post-secondary opportunities.

Long lasting positive and goal-setting partnerships between families and schools are based on mutual trust and respect developed over time. Here are a few tips that might help you strengthen this partnership:

Engage in Two-Way Communication

It is very important to communicate with the school how you feel most comfortable discussing your child’s education. Let them know if it is in person, via email, via text message, via note with the child or through an interpreter or friend. Don’t be afraid to ask questions when you do not understand information that has been sent home from the school.

Sharing of Cultural Norms, Family Structure, Stressors and Challenges

Let the school know what language you speak with your child at home and if there are important cultural traditions in speaking the preferred language in the home. Advise the school about your family structure, stressors or unique challenges that you or your child might be facing.
Support Your Child’s Learning

Take advantage of any family or community engagement activities at your school. By becoming an equal partner, your school can start to become a place where all families feel welcomed, included and valued.

**Ask:**

“Are there resources or tools that I can use to help me support my child’s learning?”

**Share:**

“I would like to share with you what I know about my child. I would like to be your partner in helping my child’s learning.”

For more resources on supporting your child’s learning, visit [www.capta.org/family-engagement](http://www.capta.org/family-engagement).

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PTA Supports Immigrant Families

In light of recent changes to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, California State PTA calls on the United States Congress to seize the opportunity to craft bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform that will protect all children and ensure their education, health and safety without regard to immigration status.

As the oldest and largest child-advocacy association in the state, California State PTA believes all children, regardless of their immigration status, have the right to a quality public education, adequate food and shelter and basic health services. It is in the national interest to ensure that all children, including undocumented children, have the opportunity to reach their full potential and become productive members of society. Access to a free public education is the most effective method of securing this opportunity, and should not be denied to any child.

Read more online at [www.capta.org/daca](http://www.capta.org/daca).
California State PTA’s award-winning School Smarts Parent Engagement Program is making a difference for thousands of parents across the state.

Through a seven-session program, School Smarts increases parents’ knowledge of the importance of their role as their child’s first teacher, why involvement in their child’s education is essential, and encourages learning at home. The parent engagement program strengthens the school community by educating a diverse group of parents on meaningful parent involvement and effective communication with school personnel.

The program is currently available in six languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese. School Smarts not only promotes inclusiveness, but also celebrates diversity.

“Most of us are newcomers and non-English speakers. We understand that education is very important for every family and how it will help our dreams come true. As newcomers we need help to understand the educational plan from kindergarten to college in the United States. We have a duty to support our school and our communities to become better, safer and healthier,” said School Smarts graduate Wentao from Alameda Unified School District, who was part of an all-Chinese School Smarts class.

Wentao and other participants represent the diverse face of family engagement across the state of California. While all participants may have different backgrounds, cultures and languages, all share the same passionate commitment to the success of their child, school and community.

To learn more about the School Smarts program, visit www.capta.org/schoolsmarts or contact us at schoolsmarts@capta.org to bring School Smarts to your school or school district.
This Thanksgiving, California State PTA gave thanks to the thousands of volunteers and members throughout the state that positively impact the lives of all children and families.

As the nation’s largest and highest profile child-advocacy organization, California State PTA and its volunteers and members connect families and schools and promote the education, health and welfare of all children and youth.

Last year, PTA volunteers contributed more than 13 million hours in their classrooms, schools and communities. Those hours are valued at $332 million in contribution to positively impact the lives of all children and families. PTA volunteers plan field trips, assist in classrooms, promote parent engagement, organize fundraisers, speak up on important children’s issues and take care of the daily needs of the local association and more.

“The work of PTA would not be possible without the countless hours our dedicated volunteers give each year to support our children and schools,” said California State PTA President Dianna MacDonald.

Through advocacy and the support of families and the community, PTA has established programs and called for legislation to improve the lives of all children, such as creating kindergarten classes, child-labor laws, public-health services, hot-and-healthy lunch programs and arts in education.

California State PTA has a long tradition of speaking up and speaking out on behalf of all children and families at national, state, regional and local levels. Join your local PTA and be the voice for all children.

For volunteer recognition awards and more, visit the PTA Store at www.capta.org/pta-store.
Parenting and School Improvement
Have a Lot in Common

How is your child doing in school?
That’s a question you as a parent can probably answer pretty quickly. Likely, it’s also a question you think is important and that you ask yourself often.

What if the question was how well your child’s school or your local school district is doing? The State of California now has somewhere you can go to easily ask and answer that question – the California School Dashboard. There, you can find the vital information for your child’s school and district. Visit www.caschooldashboard.org to access this new asset in education.

Do you really need all that information? When you look up your school or district on the Dashboard, you’re going to see a screen that has a lot of information. It will tell you about how students are doing on state tests, how many are graduating from high school and much more. Do you really need to know all that?

Let’s go back to the question we started with. What if you asked how your child is doing in school and the answer you got was simply “fine” or “great” or “not so good.” You’d want to dig deeper. How well is he doing in math and reading? Is she improving in science? How is her behavior? Is he on track to graduate from high school? By creating the Dashboard, the state is asking and answering the same kinds of questions about our schools and focusing on priorities created under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

The Dashboard summarizes several state indicators based on data about schools that the state collects. That means the measures used are the same for all schools and districts. The state has set levels of performance so we can all compare and rate the performance of schools and districts.

When you visit the Dashboard online, you will be able to see both the current status and how outcomes have changed on many of these indicators. You will also see reports for how the outcomes differ for various groups of students based on their ethnicity, income levels and other characteristics. In a few cases – such as chronic absenteeism and college/career readiness – some of that information is not yet available.

The Dashboard also includes some local indicators. Because these are based on data that school districts collect and report themselves, you won’t be able to easily compare them across districts.

Using the Dashboard is Easy

Go to the website:
www.caschooldashboard.org

Use the search box to quickly find your school or district. Before you search, check out the short video tutorial that explains the various section of the Dashboard. There’s also a “Quick Start” guide and a more comprehensive explanation of what you’ll see and what it means.
On the top level of the Dashboard you’ll see if this reporting requirement was “Met” or “Not Met” for each indicator. You can then click through to what the school district reported. Districts are only required to provide district-wide summaries, so you’ll need to ask local officials for the details related to specific schools.

**How will the Dashboard data be used?**

In the past, schools that were identified as not making adequate progress were “shamed” for not being successful. For example, the state required that schools send letters home to parents saying the school was low-performing and that schools do what outside experts said was needed to fix the problem.

The idea behind California’s new system is that educating students is complex work and that many different things affect their success. No one has all the answers. We need to work together based on shared information about what’s working well and where improvement is needed, and that is what the Dashboard can provide.

The information can then be the basis for meaningful, constructive conversations about the progress and performance of students and schools. A lot of that happens when school districts create their Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs). The hope is that the data and the conversations will leave “shame and blame” accountability behind. Instead, local school communities will undertake a process of continuous improvement to support our children’s learning.

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**State indicators, based on data the state collects, include:**

- Scores on the state English and math tests students take each spring
- The progress of English learners toward mastering English
- The percentage of students graduating on time
- The number of students who are chronically absent
- How many students are suspended from school
- The percentage of students leaving high school prepared for college and/or their career.

**Local indicators, based on what districts choose to measure and report, include:**

- The quality of basic services like facilities, teacher qualifications and instructional materials
- The progress the district is making in implementing new standards for what is taught and how
- A locally determined measure of parent involvement activities
- Survey results that show what students think of their school, often referred to as school conditions and climate.
From universal kindergarten to a juvenile justice system, PTA has been at the heart of our nation's greatest advances for children and families. California State PTA has made a profound difference in the lives of all children and families.

Our advocacy goals include:

- 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
- Promote schools as a safe and welcoming environment for all students, families and communities and support children's health and welfare in all aspects of their lives
- Support and protect high-quality public education from efforts that would weaken this vital foundation of our democracy
- Advocate for authentic and measurable family-engagement standards in education policy.

This year, California State PTA took positions on more than 120 bills in the California Legislature, of which 34 were signed and approved – a huge win! Here are a few of the recent advocacy advances:

**Signed and Supported by California State PTA:**

**AB 10 (Cristina Garcia):**
This bill requires any public school, serving grades 6-12 with at least 40 percent of student body receiving free/reduced lunch, to provide feminine hygiene products free of charge. California State PTA supported this bill as an equity issue to eliminate any barriers for

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**Save the Date**

2018 Legislation Conference

California State PTA speaks up for all children across the state and you can, too! Whether you’re an experienced advocate or have never participated before, the 2018 California State PTA Legislation Conference is for you. Join us in Sacramento on January 22-23, 2018 to learn more about the key issues and legislation impacting your child, school and community.

Join other PTA volunteers and leaders and be part of the statewide effort to strengthen the education, health and safety for all children by engaging in PTA’s advocacy goals and legislative priorities.

Get the latest information from legislators and key officials about important issues for children and families.

Visit directly with legislators who represent your community – and if you’re new to the process, we’ll connect you with others so you can learn how to have more productive visits with your legislator.

2018 California State PTA Legislation Conference

January 22-23, 2018

Sheraton Grand Hotel | 1230 J Street | Sacramento, CA

Register today [www.capta.org/legislation-conference](http://www.capta.org/legislation-conference)
students from fully participating in their studies or sports activities.

**AB 480 (Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher):**
This bill adds diapers to the lists of supportive services that would be covered by CalWORKS. California State PTA supported this bill because of the necessity and expense of diapers, and our primary goal to advocate and protect the most vulnerable children.

**SB 751 (Jerry Hill):**
This bill adjusts the reserve cap implemented on local school districts in 2014. California State PTA has long supported a remedy to this issue and allowing local school districts to budget for the needs of their community and students.

**Bills to Watch this Year:**

**AB 1217 (Raul Bocanegra/Anthony Portantino):**
This misguided attempt at creating a new STEM school in Los Angeles and subverting every local agency was strongly opposed by California State PTA and could potentially return in 2018. California State PTA has long supported public charters that are developed, evaluated and held accountable by their local communities. This bill circumvents all local contributions and oversight.

**SB 328 (Anthony Portantino):**
California State PTA will continue to work with the bill's author in hopes of encouraging the State to recognize how crucial a later start time is for the health and well-being of our students in grades 6-12.

To learn more about California State PTA's advocacy efforts, visit [www.capta.org/advocacy](http://www.capta.org/advocacy).

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**You’re an Advocate, Too!**

Have you ever spoken to a teacher or principal about a problem you wanted to help solve or an issue you wanted to help address for your child? That is advocacy. There are several ways you can get involved in the advocacy efforts of PTA and help make a difference:

- **Subscribe** to Legislative Alerts
- **Attend** the 2018 Legislation Conference
- **Contact** your legislators
- **Research current legislation**
- **Learn more** about California’s state budget
- **See California laws** by subject area
- **Check out** federal legislation and policy information from National PTA
- **Review** PTA position statements and resolutions
- **Read how PTA volunteers** are giving the gift of civic engagement.
Twenty percent of youth ages 13 – 18 live with a mental health condition. PTA is working to reduce the stigma that surrounds mental illness by fostering communities where people with mental health conditions are accepted and creating a culture where people are not afraid to seek help.

Here are ways that you can help reduce the stigma associated with mental illness:

- Use respectful language to talk about mental health conditions
  - Do not define someone by their illness. You would not call someone cancerous; you would say they have cancer. The same goes for someone with a mental illness
  - Avoid using labels such as crazy, demented, lunatic, psycho or wacko
- Challenge misconceptions when you see or hear them
- Offer support and understanding to someone you think is having trouble.

As a parent or caregiver, you want what is best for your child. Fortunately, parents and families can do a lot to help create nurturing environments that support the mental health of our children and model self care practices that promote a lifetime of well-being.

Visit www.namica.org for more mental health resources.

Here are a few things we can do to help our kids practice healthy habits that contribute to their mental and physical well-being:

- **Get Enough Sleep** – Make sure your child has a consistent bedtime and gets plenty of sleep
- **Eat Well** – Help your child eat a well-balanced diet that boosts their energy, counteracts the impact of stress and provides fuel for their brain
- **Connect with Friends and Family** – All children want to feel supported, valued and connected. Make sure they spend time with individuals who care about them to help ease day-to-day stress and improve their mood
- **Turn off the Electronics** – Have your child disconnect from electronic devices one hour before bed to wind down and prepare their brain for sleep
- **Get Outside** – Proximity to green space has been associated with lower levels of stress and reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety
- **Stay Physically Active** – Exercise not only benefits your physical health, but can decrease stress, anger and tension, improve sleep and boost self-esteem and confidence.
Positive School Environment More Important Than Higher Test Scores

According to a poll by the Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies and EdSource, when evaluating school performance, California voters believe that creating a safe and positive school environment is far more important than schools earning higher test scores on standardized tests. Voters also expressed significant concerns about bullying, school fights and other forms of intimidation and violence on school campuses, along with harassment that students face on social media.

The poll also showed strong voter support for school districts to devote more funds and resources to address the needs of the state’s most vulnerable students – particularly homeless children and those whose family members are threatened with deportation as a result of current heightened federal immigration enforcement policies.

California State PTA believes all children have the right to a quality public education, basic health services and adequate food and shelter, and that every child is entitled to a safe and peaceful school environment that is orderly and empowering.

Learn more about our position statements on these and other important issues at www.capta.org/position-statements.

High School Junior Works to Promote Positive School Climate

High school junior Analaura Amezquita from Whittier High School PTSA (Thirty-Third District PTA) dedicated herself to making sure students at her high school felt welcomed, included and empowered.

Since Amezquita started her role as president of Whittier High School PTSA this fall, the PTSA has seen a membership increase of more than 60 percent – most of which were students. Even though high school students were encouraged to participate in Whittier High School PTSA before her role as president, it took Amezquita’s leadership and personalized outreach to help students feel more connected to their school.

“I’m excited to say that since my presidency started, we have seen much more diversity in our PTSA. More students started showing up to meetings and we even had students volunteer to fill the roles of Parliamentarian, Reflections Chair and Health Chair,” said Amezquita.

The PTSA worked collaboratively as staff, students and parents to positively impact their school and community by creatively fundraising through a shoe drive. They received more than 1,800 pairs of shoes that were donated to those in need, and raised nearly $2,000 to award in scholarships to seniors at Whittier High School.

“We have had two successful Red Ribbon Weeks and also hosted our first-ever Mud Run. In collaboration with the school, the PTSA also holds an event called Cardinal 75 where we honor the students with the highest GPAs and encourage them to invest in their education and their future,” said Amezquita.

Learn more about promoting a positive school climate online at www.capta.org/school-climate.