

**PTA PRIORITY: SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 7, 1980

- WHEREAS,** The PTA believes that our free public schools can best provide for every child an equal opportunity for a quality education; and
- WHEREAS,** Public education continues to be the most effective vehicle for building and maintaining a common understanding of and commitment to the basic values of our democracy; and
- WHEREAS,** Our public school system has been experiencing a decline in public confidence as evidenced by a reduction in financial support, a lessening of respect for teachers and school property, and a willingness to blame the schools for complex societal problems; and
- WHEREAS,** Every citizen should be encouraged to voice suggestions to local governing boards and state agencies and elected officials for the improvement of our schools; and
- WHEREAS,** The PTA membership can be the leading force in strengthening a valued system of public education; and
- WHEREAS,** Public education without adequate funding is not feasible; and
- WHEREAS,** The National PTA has pledged that its number one priority is: “To preserve, maintain and strengthen the public education system;” now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA focus its resources on obtaining adequate financing for public education; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts, affirm as a top priority its commitment to the preservation, maintenance and strengthening of our public school system, as pledged by the National PTA; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA develop and implement a plan of action to enable its membership to identify the problems affecting our schools; offer positive and practical solutions to correct those problems; develop public understanding of those problems; and creatively and effectively tell the story of public education.

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## BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Support and confidence in the public schools have, over the last several years, been on a gradual decline, according to the annual Gallup Poll on the Public's Attitude Toward Public Education. Another indication is shown by defeat of many tax and bond measures for schools in local and state elections. The wide publicity and support for ideas like educational vouchers and tuition tax credits also indicate that more of the public are willing to abandon the public schools.

The 1979 Gallup Poll results indicate that persons living in the West give their schools a lower rating than persons living in other major areas of the nation. As compared to 1974, the 1979 rating for combined A and B grades was 14% lower and the combined grades of D and F was 7% higher.

There is general agreement according to the study that in order for the public to respect public schools the schools must: (1) improve the quality of teachers; (2) increase discipline; (3) set higher standards; (4) give students more individual attention; (5) put more emphasis on the basics—the three R's; (6) establish closer relations with parents. Among other suggestions mentioned are: update curriculum, have smaller classes, eliminate drugs and alcohol, teach more life skills, and upgrade school facilities.

The National PTA president, Virginia Sparling, writing in *PTA Today* (November 1979), under the heading "Commitment to Children: the Key to Saving Our Public Schools," has pledged that the National PTA will, as the number one priority, "...work cooperatively, strenuously, and creatively to tell the story of education in a far more compelling and far more effective way than ever before. We are committed to the success of our children and to the success of our public school system."

The California State PTA has had this same commitment. It should, at this critical time, be our number one priority as well.