Kids and learning – it’s where parents and schools meet and where we need to work together.

Your local PTA is probably planning a number of programs and activities for the coming school year. Among them, we hope you include opportunities to teach your members learn about the learning that takes place in classrooms in your school and district.

Shared Hopes and Dreams
Parents need to understand how their goals for their children and the school’s goals go together. Sometimes it feels like educators are speaking a different language. Your PTA can and should help bridge the gap. A great place to start is by talking about what families and school officials want kids to accomplish in school. Here are some questions to discuss:

- What are the short-term goals for this year?
- And what are the long-term goals for kids when they leave the school and when they graduate from high school?
- Are there ambitious goals for all kids?

Your PTA may want to focus on some specific curriculum areas, such as arts education for example. Did you know that schools are implementing a new approach to teaching science, based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)? These should be of particular interest at the elementary and middle school levels. At both middle schools and high schools, there is a lot of emphasis on Career & Technical Education (CTE) along with college readiness. And don’t forget preparing kids to be good citizens.

PTAs can encourage and support regularly scheduled meetings with the school principal and teachers where parents can hear about learning goals and curriculum focus areas.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
The California State PTA website has a full section devoted to curriculum. You’ll find information about the arts, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Math), the civic mission of school, CTE (Career & Technical Education) and much more. Visit [capta.org/education/curriculum](http://capta.org/education/curriculum) to learn more.

Measuring Progress
Class assignments, tests and grades help teachers and parents understand how each individual child is doing. These measures look different from school to school and even from classroom to classroom.

California has a statewide testing system that allows you to see how well your child is doing compared to the state’s expectations. The California Department of Education is introducing a new electronic report that will make it easy to look up student scores and understand what they mean. The state has
also created a new website designed for parents called Starting Smarter. Learn more at ca.startingsmarter.org.

PTAs can use meetings, newsletters and social media to make sure parents know how to find these resources. At your unit meetings you can also address questions related to how your school is doing overall. The California School Dashboard summarizes results across a broad set of measures in order to help community members and educators evaluate how well local schools and districts are meetings some common goals and to see clearly where improvement is needed. At caschooldashboard.org you can look up any school or district in the state and you’ll also find some great videos and other resources to guide conversations about what you find there.

**Strategies for Meeting School and District Goals**

Some parents will want to dig deeper and learn about the plans their school and district have for achieving the learning goals.

Along with the progress measures you’ll find on the California School Dashboard, the state requires school districts to measure and report on five priorities that contribute to student success. They show up as “local indicators” on the Dashboard and include:

- Basic conditions – teachers, buildings and textbooks
- Standards implementation – making sure teachers understand and teach new material
- School climate and conditions – how safe and connected students feel at school
- Parent involvement/engagement – what is done to engage and involve parents
- Access to a broad course of study – all subjects and all kids

What you find on the Dashboard is just the beginning of the conversation. The local indicators only provide summary reports for school districts as a whole. There should be a lot of information below that summary level. PTA units and councils throughout California are creating many different kinds of forums for conversations about how these indicators are measured and how schools across a district differ in terms of their results. Your PTA could try one or more of these:

- Using Ed100.org for short meeting topics
- Meet with other parent leaders, at other schools, to compare notes
- Have a subcommittee that works closely with the School Site Council or have a Site Council update on your agenda
- Put a discussion of your school’s Dashboard results on a PTA meeting agenda, and ask your principal to explain the school plans related to the local indicator topics

**Learn More**

Go to CAPTA.org, under “Focus Areas.”

- “Education” subjects include: Curriculum (arts, STEAM, CTE and more), Common Core, Student Assessments, Summer/Extended Learning, Special Needs, Homework, Every Student Succeeds Act and School Finance.
- “LCFF/LCAP” subjects include Accountability Plans, Priority Areas and Dashboard.