

PTA MEMBERSHIP

Quick-Reference Guide



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Welcome

The national PTA organization has created this quick-reference guide to help orient you to your major areas of responsibility. It will help you gain a basic understanding of important concepts and familiarize you with resources that are available to you from the national organization. This guide supplements—but doesn't replace—the materials you receive from your state PTA.

The Basics of Membership



Overview

PTA is a membership organization. We rely on our nearly 6 million members to contribute their time and skills to school communities from coast to coast and overseas, where U.S. military families are stationed.

Every individual who joins PTA helps not only his or her own child but every child. Imagine how strong your community could be if every parent, every community member, and every business leader got involved in PTA!

Attracting new members and retaining existing members are among the most important duties of a PTA. A strong membership is essential if PTA is to be a force in decisions involving the welfare and education of children. Your active leadership will help create strong programs in your school community and a strong commitment among your members.



Membership Responsibility

While a membership chair and the membership committee are charged with developing recruitment and retention strategies, membership is the responsibility of the entire board. Without members, there is no PTA, and without the support of the entire board, membership plans and committees will not succeed. The entire board should play an active role in implementing membership recruitment and retention strategies.



Membership Chair

The membership chair is responsible for facilitating the work of the membership committee and ensuring timely, accurate communication with other PTA committees and officers. The membership chair and committee should develop a membership growth plan to direct the activities of the committee. This plan should include membership recruitment and retention strategies that will lead to overall membership growth.

Other responsibilities of the chair may include

- Attending scheduled meetings,
- Recruiting committee members,
- Leading the committee in recruitment efforts,
- Distributing membership cards,
- Working with the state membership chair to reach goals,
- Collecting and processing fees,
- Sending fees and remittance forms to the council/state PTA on a regular basis,
- Maintaining accurate membership records and relevant information on the committee's work, and
- Attending leadership and membership training.

A membership chair should have the following qualifications:

- Background in marketing or communications
- Knowledge of volunteer recruitment techniques and volunteer management
- Strong interpersonal communication skills
- Strong written communication skills



Membership Committee

The goals of the membership committee are

- To build an informed, active membership that supports the Mission, objectives, policies, and programs of the local, state, and national levels of PTA;

- To develop a membership recruitment and retention plan that emphasizes a year-round effort to involve new members; and
- To create well-thought-out plans early and carry them out with enthusiasm and imagination throughout the year.



TIP

Recruitment and Retention Tip

To succeed, the membership committee must find out the local community's concerns about the well-being of the community's children. Research current data in the news, interview decision makers, and talk with fellow community members. Focus efforts on these concerns so that your PTA will be a relevant group to join.



DETAILS

Building a Membership Committee

Look for potential committee members everywhere. Potential members may include

- Past unit presidents or officers;
- Members with experience in marketing, public relations, sales, recruitment, or statistics; and
- New members who are excited about PTA and are willing to share their experiences.

Most membership committees have five to 10 members. The optimum size of the committee will vary, depending on the needs of the local PTA.

Consider the demographics of the school and make your membership committee inclusive. Include parents, teachers, and the principal. Also include people from all areas of the community and, when bylaws permit it, at least one student.

Committees work best when

- The purpose of their existence is clear.
- Each member knows what he or she is to do, has been trained properly, and knows when completion of tasks is expected.

- Each member is provided with relevant committee information, such as a calendar of the year's meetings and events and a budget for his or her particular work.



Increasing Membership Step by Step

Membership growth is a sign that your PTA is a vital and relevant organization that is making a difference in your community. If your PTA is an effective, respected, and fun association, people will be eager to join.

Lay the Groundwork for Success

- Ask your board to develop a consistent message around the value of membership in your unit, as well as talking points all can use in membership recruitment. Identify two or three successes from the previous year, determine two or three goals that can be achieved with more members, and use these as the basis of the message.
- Have the entire board practice using these talking points on each other before they ask others to join.
- Determine whether your PTA/PTSA is meeting the needs of your members and community.
- Align your goals with the needs of your members and community.
- Make sure you have the support of your principal and school staff.



Membership Marketing Tip

Don't recreate the wheel. Use the customizable membership marketing templates and tools located under the Local Leader section of the Leadership tab on the national PTA website (www.pta.org). Find banners, fliers, letters, posters, ads, postcards, and much more.

Before School Starts

- Set a goal for membership for the year—challenge yourself!
- Find out how your treasurer would like to handle the collection and deposit of membership fees.
- Prepare membership forms, take-home fliers, and promotional signs.

- Send membership forms and organization information home with preschool registration packets.
- Send letters to last year's members asking them to join again.
- Make sure the memberships of PTA board members are current.
- Plan a special invitation to join, as well as a follow-up thank-you, for school staff. School staff can be great allies in encouraging parent participation.

Take Advantage of Back-to-School Enthusiasm

- Send membership forms and fliers home with first-day packets.
- Have a membership table at all orientation and back-to-school events.
- Design a visual representation of your growing membership (e.g., an illustration of a tree to which leaves with new-member names can be added, or a jar to which beans, marbles, or ping-pong balls can be added) for display in your school.
- Ask people to join your PTA—don't wait for them to offer.
- Make it easy for people to join your PTA: have all the signup materials close at hand.

Throughout the Year

- Set up your membership table at every PTA and school event.
- Make time to welcome or thank PTA event attendees and let them know the event was made possible by PTA members. Ask those who enjoyed the event to join PTA to show their support for your unit.
- Regularly include articles about membership and a clip-out membership form in your newsletter.
- Publish your current membership count in your newsletter. Check it against your goal often.



CONTACT



LINKS

Contact Us

Contact your state PTA and PTA national headquarters for support.

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Website: www.pta.org



TIP

Tips for Recruiting New Members

- Get to know your neighborhood, school, and community. Your membership should reflect your population.
- Contact everyone who has inquired about membership and ask him or her to join.
- Conduct workshops that target prospective members at conferences and other events.
- Develop a membership growth plan that promotes inclusiveness.
- Have flexible meeting times and locations.
- Develop a prospect list of potential members.
- Know and promote the benefits of being a member.
- Organize membership drives at schools, churches, social clubs, service organizations, etc.
- “No time” is often given as a reason for not joining PTA. Separate the act of joining from the act of volunteering by signing up volunteers on a separate form or at times when you are not recruiting new members.
- Say “thank you.”



DID YOU
KNOW?

Fact About Asking People to Join PTA

In a recent PTA survey, 49 percent of respondents said the reason people don't join PTA is that *no one asked them*. The way we ask people to join needs to be personal, powerful, and meaningful.

Tracking and Retaining Members



TIP

Retention Tip

Surveys show members remain in PTA primarily because they believe their membership helps their child. Educate members about and promote what you do for students, families, and schools in your community.



CHECKLIST

Checklist: Retaining Members

- Be ready to explain the existing and developing benefits of PTA membership to renewing members.
- Participate in PTA's electronic bulletin board on membership at www.pta.org.
- Contact members who have re-joined recently. Welcome them back and ask them what spurred their decision to come back.
- Open the door to two-way communication. Many organizations rely on a newsletter to communicate with their members, but not all members want their information this way. Make it clear on everything you print how you can be reached: by phone, fax, postal mail, e-mail, voice mail, online, etc. Give members all the options you can.
- Post basic information on your website: PTA contact information; the PTA Mission and objectives; PTA background; names of board members; a current list of events and activities; etc. Keep your website current and relevant. Outdated material is a sign that no one is monitoring or maintaining your website.
- Teach new members how to use PTA services.
- Find out why your members are leaving. Ask for honest feedback on their PTA experience and evaluate your current membership practices.
- Be attentive to the needs of all members. Know what's important to them and their reasons for joining.
- Empower your members to become advocates for all children and to speak up on issues that affect them.

- Know that how you treat members will make PTA thrive or fail.
- Serve your members. Do not let them leave until their requests for assistance have been addressed; then follow up to make sure members were satisfied with what they received.



TIP

Retention Tip

It takes more effort to recruit a new member than it does to keep an existing one. In addition, returning members are more likely to take on leadership roles. Focus on retention.



CHECKLIST

Checklist: Tracking Member Data

Create and maintain a membership database. This is a crucial tool for your membership recruitment and retention efforts; it will help you keep track of members, dues payments, and mailings (by both postal mail and e-mail).

Use e-mail. E-mail allows you to communicate with members who are not able to attend meetings. Collect e-mail addresses on your membership form. As new member benefits become available, the national PTA organization will e-mail unit presidents. These messages will be written in a newsletter format that you can use in your PTA newsletter or forward to your members via e-mail.



DETAILS

Online Membership Data Reporting (OMDR)

For years, PTAs have wanted a mechanism that would allow them to collect dues more quickly and cost-effectively, communicate with members, track demographics, and offer more member benefits. PTA's Online Membership Data Reporting (OMDR) project is the national organization's response to that desire.

Designed to give local units a direct means for entering data into PTA's member database, OMDR can help all levels of the association be more efficient with funds and respond better to member needs.

Diversity and Inclusiveness



Overview

PTA must be inclusive of all groups—rural and urban; fathers and mothers; African-American, Latin-American, and Asian-American; elementary and high school; high-income and low-income; and so forth. PTA says it speaks for all children. Therefore, our membership must be representative of all kinds of parents, including extended family members and other persons who provide primary care to children.

A new member's first impression of PTA is an important one and will often determine whether he or she becomes an active or a passive member. A new member expects to access member services and resources quickly, and to be welcomed into the group as soon as possible.

Accompany new members as they navigate the organization, and make accommodations for language or other perceived barriers. Make sure that members know what to expect when they attend a meeting or embark on a project.



Principles of Diversity

Diversity not only assumes that everyone is different, but also recognizes that those differences add value. Those differences are your community's assets.

Diversity includes different perspectives so the work of the organization can be effective for all.

Leaders have to commit to supporting and encouraging diversity and inclusiveness.



Increasing Diversity and Inclusiveness Step by Step

Assess Your Unit's Diversity

Unit leaders should ask themselves these questions to assess their approach to diversity:

- Does the diversity of membership in the unit reflect the diversity in the school's population? If not, why not?
- Is that diversity reflected on the board and among committee members?
- Are unit leaders aware of the diversity of talents in the school community? Does the unit find ways to accommodate those talents in its work?
- Does the unit have a method to collect information on the needs of all students? Is there a method of selecting which issues the unit will address that ensures fairness to all?

Actions You Can Take

- Ask underserved populations why they aren't involved in PTA, and then show them how PTA fits their needs. Don't make assumptions about them or their needs. PTA leaders can talk with community leaders of underserved populations to gain a clearer understanding of needs and cultures.
- Look at every person as an individual and not as a member of a group.
- Recognize and celebrate differences; they make us unique.
- Integrate diversity into all aspects of operational and organizational functions. For example, if the group you're trying to recruit is far away from the school, look into holding meetings closer to them. The meetings do not always have to take place at school.
- Discuss barriers to greater diversity and inclusiveness, and then remove the barriers. Don't just say you represent diverse populations; actually include them. For example, if language is keeping members from attending meetings or other functions, work with community leaders to provide translators.

Desired Outcomes

- Develop at least one creative program or event that is inclusive of and attractive to a diverse membership.
- Develop a membership recruitment and retention plan that promotes inclusiveness and diversity. For this plan to be successful, everyone must fully buy into the plan's aims and expectations.
- Create an environment in which every member is welcomed and valued for his or her unique abilities and contributions. Consider the various needs up front to help all families participate in PTA.



DETAILS

Involving Men in PTA

Many people, when they hear parent involvement and PTA, automatically think of mothers. Women are vital to fulfilling PTA's Mission, but male involvement in PTA should not be discounted. A strong, vibrant PTA should be inclusive of all parents—and that means PTAs must find ways to include dads.



STEP BY STEP

10 Ways to Involve Men in PTA

1. Make the membership pitch relevant to males. The number one reason men join PTA is "to work to improve the school for the benefit of my child/children." Therefore, explain how a father's involvement in PTA:

- Shows added interest in his child's education and school activities,
- Shows greater support for his child's teachers and school, and
- Improves relationships between parents and school personnel.

2. Use specific messaging and advertising aimed at men.

Be sure to show men's involvement in your PTA in your communications to members and potential members.

3. Just ask them.

4. Ask the women in your PTA to invite the men in their children's lives to join PTA. Moms can (and should) influence dads to join PTA!

5. Create more volunteer opportunities and special events for dads. Events aimed at fathers can raise awareness that other fathers are actively involved. When men see that other men are involved, they are more likely to join.

6. Emphasize that becoming a PTA member doesn't necessarily involve a large time commitment.

7. Give it to 'em straight. Clearly define volunteer roles and expectations.

8. Communicate with men the way they want to be reached. Men want fewer meetings and at more convenient times, and they want meetings to have a clear agenda and be results-oriented. Brief communications tend to make men pay more attention to the message or issue at hand—and more likely to participate.

9. Seek male members in the community. Present the PTA message at local service clubs that have a large male contingent, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions clubs. If men see that other club members support the work of PTA, they might be more likely to join.

10. Recognize and celebrate members. Reinforcing men's contributions, while being mindful of what all members do for PTA, creates a positive atmosphere.



Fact About Women's Influence on Men's Participation in PTA

A spouse's involvement in PTA seems to be an indicator of whether or not a father will join PTA. In a recent PTA survey, more than 90 percent of the male PTA members surveyed indicated that their spouses were already members. Many respondents said their wives largely contributed to their own involvement in PTA.

Member Profile Worksheet

In addition to subscribing to the Mission of PTA, a PTA/PTSA member may look to PTA to fulfill personal needs. Since PTAs are for everyone, a local unit should support the needs of a wide variety of members—from senior citizens to future parents. When recruiting members, it’s helpful to emphasize what people can gain by becoming involved. Individuals usually respond positively when they believe an organization understands their primary needs and is working to address them. The chart below shows some examples of what different types of people may get out of being a PTA member.

Member Type	Primary Needs	How PTA Addresses Those Needs
Single Parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support through networking 2. Input into decisions that affect their children 3. Parent education programs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many PTAs offer advice about issues such as the availability of out-of-school programs and the safety of children home alone after school. 2. PTA addresses school policy issues, such as discipline and bullying prevention programs. 3. Many PTAs have access to videos on topics such as critical TV-viewing, enhancing children’s self-esteem, raising alcohol- and drug-free children, and school bus safety.
Working Parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A voice 2. Partnership with school administration and other staff 3. To be part of the solution, not part of the problem 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PTA represents parents in schools and before lawmakers as it works to make a difference in events, policies, and laws that affect children. 2. PTA distributes information on a regular basis via newsletters, e-mails, and websites so that members can be informed of and respond to school issues and activities in a timely manner. 3. PTA offers parents the opportunity to make positive changes in the school and in the community.

Member Profile Worksheet, page 2

Member Type	Primary Needs	How PTA Addresses Those Needs
Young Parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to parenting programs 2. An understanding of school policies 3. Friendships, a support network 4. To network through technology 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PTA offers parenting training and information that can provide lifelong skills for raising children. 2. PTA informs parents about education issues. 3. Local PTA activities, as well as state and national conventions, provide a forum for establishing long-term friendships with people who have common goals. 4. National, state, and some local PTA websites have valuable resources on parenting and tools for communicating with other members.
Non-English-speaking/ minority parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An understanding of the school system 2. Interaction with other parents 3. Opportunities to share their culture and promote a positive community experience 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PTA helps parents navigate the school system and empowers them to act. 2. PTA meetings allow discussion between various groups. 3. PTA can offer interaction with other families through diversity awareness training and activities that emphasize multiculturalism.
Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A sense of belonging 2. Recognition of creative talents 3. To practice citizenship 4. Leadership opportunities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students serving on committees feel included, which helps their self-esteem. 2. Students have the opportunity to participate in PTA's Reflections Program. 3. PTA provides a forum in which students, parents, school faculty, and the community can come together to share ideas on topics that affect children and education. 4. PTA empowers students to share information and suggest actions on issues that affect their lives.

Member Profile Worksheet, page 3

Member Type	Primary Needs	How PTA Addresses Those Needs
Senior citizens and grandparents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To feel useful 2. To mentor younger adults 3. To connect with youth 4. Information on school and community events 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PTA encourages active participation on committees. 2. PTA invites senior citizens to share their parenting skills and knowledge through parenting workshops. 3. PTAs and schools welcome the help of senior citizens in the classroom. 4. PTA disseminates information in a variety of ways to keep members informed.
School staff and school board	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A voice for promoting their issues 2. Community and parent support 3. A better understanding of the school community's members 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PTA has a voice in local, state, and national governments on topics such as school funding, school facilities, and teaching standards. 2. PTA has programs (such as Building Successful Partnerships) and materials designed to help educators and administrators encourage and generate parent involvement at school. 3. PTA is knowledgeable about school and community needs.
Community groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased visibility and accessibility 2. Shared resources 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnering with PTA provides positive advertising and encourages sharing of information. 2. PTA provides volunteer crossover and strong legislative advocacy for issues affecting children in the community.

Member Profile Worksheet, page 4

Member Type	Primary Needs	How PTA Addresses Those Needs
Businesses, chambers of commerce, and trade associations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive public relations 2. Investment in the future 3. Staff training 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnering with PTA can help businesses develop a positive image in the community. 2. PTA can offer opportunities for businesses to share with others the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to secure a solid future in the workforce for our children. 3. PTA gives leadership training to members on a regular basis.
Mayor and government officials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to parents 2. Positive public relations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PTA facilitates access to parents and can provide feedback from an elected official's constituents. 2. Partnering with PTA helps create a healthy, nurturing environment for the whole community.

PTA Membership

Can you think of other types of members? Use the table below to list them and record three or four primary needs they might have. Then identify how PTA can address those needs. These are individuals you can approach to increase your membership and your success in the school and community.

Member Type	Primary Needs	How PTA Addresses Those Needs

Marketing Membership



Overview

In your role as membership chair, you may do many things to promote PTA membership, such as attending back-to-school ice cream socials, writing an editorial about parent involvement for a local newspaper, and strategizing how to reach potential members. This section will give you some talking points that define the PTA difference and some ideas on how to market PTA in your community.

The PTA Difference

Given the longevity and universal name recognition of our organization, it's easy to understand how "PTA" is commonly used to describe all parent groups, whether or not they are actually affiliated with PTA. Parents, teachers, and even administrators frequently are confused or even unaware of the differences between PTA and other parent organizations. So what truly differentiates PTA from all other parent groups?

Defining the difference

- PTA is the nation's original parent group in schools. We are the nation's premier resource for parent involvement.
- PTA is a national, grassroots, not-for-profit organization; neither the organization nor its leaders make any profit or receive any financial benefit from PTA activities.
- PTA is composed of nearly 6 million members in 23,000 local units. These units are supported by a national and state system that provides them with information, resources, and training.
- PTA is run by volunteers and led by volunteers, and we are accountable to our members, parents, and schools.
- Members receive the information and training they need to advocate effectively at the local, state, and national levels for funding, programs, and services for their schools.
- PTA is an inclusive organization that is open to all those who care about children and schools.

- Each of the 23,000 local units selects the programs and activities that it will undertake to address the needs of its local school and children. While the national PTA organization creates many successful programs for local units to use, there are no PTA-mandated programs.
- State PTAs and the national PTA organization provide support to help local PTAs succeed.
- Members receive special discounts and promotional offers from PTA National Member Benefits Providers.

PTA Programs

PTA programs are created with leading expert organizations on topics of importance to our members, at members' request. The programs are user-friendly and are free to PTAs. Each program offers interesting activities, helpful evaluation tools, and tips to involve all key players in a school community. No other parent group offers such credible and comprehensive programs to successfully engage families and communities.



Strategies to Promote PTA

The Marketing Plan

A marketing plan includes the following components:

- **Desired outcomes.** Clearly define what should happen if the marketing plan is successful. Establish no more than five desired outcomes. All of the desired outcomes should be measurable and should reflect your unit's goals for membership growth and retention.
- **Strategies.** Choose a target audience that your unit can reach, and clearly define the benefits of membership for the target audience. Then identify ways to reach the target audience, and show that the benefits of pursuing these members outweigh the costs.
- **Action plan and budget.** Lay out the project tasks and timelines, as well as the amount of money and volunteer time

budgeted for each task.

- **Measurement and evaluation.** Define how success will be measured (e.g., the number of new male members) and establish a way to evaluate the outcomes (e.g., desired number of members recruited below/at/above budget).

Promotion Methods

It is very important to get the word out about your PTA and what a valuable group it is. The methods you use to promote PTA can be formal or informal. The most important part of your message is the invitation to join PTA.

- **Direct marketing,** such as advertisements, special events, messages posted in the community, direct mail, etc.
- **Indirect marketing,** such as word of mouth, public service (e.g., providing speakers to events), community relations (interactions with citizens and other community groups), etc.

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Membership Growth Plan Worksheet

Membership Numbers. For questions 1–4: Compare the current number of members with the previous year’s total to determine whether membership is increasing or decreasing. Then compare the current number of members with the overall number of parents of school-age children in the community to determine the size of the group available for recruitment. Although anyone can join PTA, we’ll initially focus our efforts on parents, because they’re the most likely to join.

1. Number of current members _____
2. What was the membership growth (+) or loss (-) (in numbers) from the previous year? _____
3. Number of parents in the school _____
4. Number of students in the school _____

Demographics. For questions 5–7: Knowing the demographics of potential members can help you define how you’ll approach them when recruiting. Different groups require different approaches.

5. Ethnicity, race, location

The following populations constitute what percentages of your current membership? How do those percentages compare to the percentages in the overall community? Most city or town halls can provide you with the community’s demographic makeup.

Population	Percentage of PTA Membership	Percentage of the Community’s Population
Asian		
African American		
Caucasian		
Hispanic		
Native American		
Other Ethnic/Racial Groups		
Urban		
Suburban		
Rural		

Member Profile Worksheet, page 2

6. Average family size	1–2 children	_____
	3–4 children	_____
	5 or more children	_____
7. Average age range of parents	18–34	_____
	35–45	_____
	46–55	_____
	56–65	_____

Member and School Needs. For questions 8–16: You know the groups from which you want to recruit and the needs they've identified (see the Sample Membership Survey on page 29). Compare each survey respondent's needs with the overall survey responses, and select those issues that would appeal to the widest group of parents. Then begin your planning. Take into consideration the best meeting locations, best times of day, and any special accommodations necessary (babysitting services, translators, wheelchair accessibility, etc.).

The survey results, as well as conversations with your school principal and other administrators, will give you the kind of information you'll need to schedule the major activities for the year. Once those activities have been identified and assigned to various committees, the volunteers on those committees can begin to plan events, identifying what funds, time, and personnel they'll need.

8. Membership survey

What do your members want? _____

Why did they join? _____

Are they getting what they expected? _____

Member Profile Worksheet, page 3

9. If membership has declined, what factors may have contributed to the decline?

How many students have graduated from elementary school to middle school or junior high to high school? (Parents are less likely to join a PTA when their children are in high school.) _____

10. Identify competition in the community.

Other general parent groups _____

Athletic booster clubs _____

Music (band, choir) booster clubs _____

11. What membership or programmatic efforts have been run in the past?

Were they successful in recruiting members? _____

12. Based on the population of your community, from which population groups will your unit recruit members? _____

13. What kinds of programs would be attractive to parents in these groups?

14. What kinds of meeting locales would be attractive to parents in these groups?

15. What kinds of meeting times would be attractive to parents in these groups?

Sample Membership Growth Plan

Membership Numbers and Demographics XYZ Middle School PTA	
Total school population is 500 students, 900 parents, 30 staff (teachers, administrators) 25% Caucasian 25% African American 25% Hispanic 10% Native American 15% Other	Current PTA membership is 200: 180 parents, 20 staff (teachers, administrators) 40% Caucasian 35% African American 10% Hispanic 5% Native American 10% Other The unit grew the past two years.

Based on the size of the school, current PTA membership, and population breakdown (questions 1–7 on your growth plan worksheet), the unit has set the following membership goal:

Goal: To increase membership by 100 by March 31, while addressing member and school needs.

Member and School Needs

Based on needs identified by members and school and community leaders (questions 8–16 on your growth plan worksheet), the unit will address the following issues:

- Increasing volunteer assistance in the classroom
- Expanding parking-lot capacity for school performances
- Ensuring school safety

The unit has selected two projects for each of the three issues. For each project, the unit has identified which PTA committee will be responsible, when the project will be held, the number of people needed to successfully conduct the project, and what the budget is. Each committee will be responsible for working with the membership committee to promote attendance and volunteer-recruitment. Unit leaders have also met with community leaders of the populations represented at the school, and identified how to approach each group.

Lastly, the unit leaders have put together a calendar that notes unit goals, shows the dates of general membership meetings and parent nights at the school, and indicates project timelines.

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Sample Membership Survey

(to be distributed to all parents in a school)

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Are you a member of this PTA? Yes No

Are you a member of other PTAs? Yes No

If yes, please name them. _____

What do you believe is the purpose of our PTA? _____

Why did you join PTA? _____

What does the PTA do well? _____

What could the PTA do better? _____

Would you recruit a new member? Yes No

What are the weak points of our unit? _____

What is the biggest challenge you face as a parent? _____

What is the biggest challenge our school community faces? _____

Continued on back

PTA Membership

What new unit activity would you most like to see implemented? _____

What current unit activity would you most like to see ended? _____

In what areas would you become active if given the opportunity? _____

Overall, I feel the PTA is Very helpful Helpful Not helpful

Meetings and projects are Very helpful Helpful Not helpful

Would you like to see resource materials, such as handouts, videos/DVDs, and brochures, available to PTA members? Yes No

Did you ever request assistance or information from the PTA? Yes No

If yes, did you receive a prompt response? Yes No

Do you believe the PTA has been working on behalf of all children and youth? Yes No

If no, what do you think should be addressed that the PTA has failed to address?



Checklist: Making Presentations to Potential Members

Most objections to joining PTA fall into the areas of time, impact, and perceived value. Use this checklist when preparing for presentations to ensure that you address these key areas.

- **Time.** When parents say they don't have time to join PTA, what they are probably saying is that they don't want to volunteer dozens of hours each week. Explain that PTA appreciates everyone's membership, whether or not the member volunteers, because each member increases PTA's ability to advocate for children.
- **Impact.** Parents want to know if their membership in PTA is going to have a positive impact, if it will benefit their children. You can tell them, "Yes!" Decades' worth of research shows that when parents are involved, students perform better in school. They receive higher grades and test scores, have better school attendance and lower rates of suspension, are more likely to graduate high school, and are more likely to pursue postsecondary education. Children of involved parents also exhibit increased motivation, better self-esteem, less drug and alcohol use, and fewer instances of violent behavior. Those great benefits come from parent involvement, a major focus of PTA.
- **Value.** People like to join organizations that make a difference in the lives of others, are educational and beneficial to the community, allow them to network with successful people, and provide opportunities to have fun. When promoting PTA, highlight that members will be able to mix with diverse individuals through local PTA activities. Emphasize once again that the number-one benefit of PTA membership for parents is the ability to help their children. For many parents, that is reason enough to join.

Also, explain what members get for their membership dues. In addition to materials and benefits from their local and state PTAs, members receive the following:

- Access to select articles from *Our Children* magazine online
- *The PTA Parent*, an electronic newsletter that covers parenting topics
- *This Week in Washington*, an electronic newsletter produced when Congress is in session that explains national legislation affecting families and public education

- Exclusive member benefits from the national PTA organization, including discounts, special offers, and promotions from national companies
- Free e-learning courses on PTA basics, as well as on subjects that can be applied to members’ personal lives, such as conflict resolution and goal setting
- Discounted member rates for the annual PTA National Convention and on subscriptions to the print version of *Our Children*
- Access to join the Member-to-Member Network, the grassroots advocacy system that connects PTA members with members of Congress



Frequently Asked Question About the “Ask”

What can I say to people who object when I ask them to join?

Objection...	You can say...
“I don’t have the time!”	“I can certainly understand that. It’s not the amount of time you can contribute that’s most important, but rather your commitment to help PTA make a difference in the lives of children. You don’t have to be a volunteer to be a member. Our members are involved in many activities in addition to PTA. We value their time and strive to use it effectively.” (Give examples of events or projects that might appeal to this person.)
“I don’t have any children in school!”	“You don’t have to have children in school to belong to PTA. Anyone who cares about children belongs in our organization. It is important that we all have a voice in the decision-making process relating to the laws and regulations that affect children. You can have that voice through PTA. Every child needs you. You will make a difference.”
“I don’t agree with a lot of the PTA positions!”	“The only way to avoid disagreement would be to adopt a ‘do-nothing’ policy. As a grassroots organization, our policies are determined by a democratic process. We welcome your involvement in this effort. It is through members like you that our direction is determined.”

Objection...	You can say...
"Not right now—maybe later!"	"If you put off being part of PTA, you may miss out on having your voice heard when it is needed most. Our members are the heart of the organization and, by participating in PTA activities, they determine the course of action we need to take. Please make the time to put children first."
"I just can't join another organization. I belong to too many already!"	"I know that there are many good organizations to belong to, and it is difficult to support them all. But I think PTA is very special. Let me tell you a little about what we are doing. I find it helps to have information when I'm making a choice. (Talk about the value of PTA.) Remember, PTA works to prevent problems and, of course, to address those concerns that affect us right now. We really need people like you in PTA."
"Your organization doesn't really do anything!"	"I cannot speak for what may have happened in previous years, but let me bring you up-to-date on what we are doing now. (List current activities, programs, accomplishments, etc.) As you see, we are a very active group, doing many things that benefit all our children. On a state and national level, we have been instrumental in many initiatives from which all children have benefited. We have a long history of accomplishments. (Have a list of accomplishments at the state and national levels available for reference.) We need time, funds, and good will from people like you to keep it happening. There is so much for us to do, but we need people like you. Join us and help us do even more."

Partnering Ideas for Units

A great way to experience growth in membership and in stature is to hold events with local businesses and organizations. Listed below are a few events hosted by PTAs to boost recruitment efforts.

Event	Business Type
Bike safety rodeo	Insurance companies
Community development	City council
Read-a-thon	Local libraries
Safety: traffic, home, school, playground	Local police and fire departments
Educational fair	Community groups with expertise in dance, crafts, storytelling, and science
Info share	Any local organizations and businesses
Literacy program	Senior citizen groups and local libraries
Public service announcements	Local radio or television stations
Work fair/career day	Area businesses
Discount incentives for members	Area businesses
Health and safety fair	Area health groups
Forum on special needs children	Assistance groups for people with disabilities
Adopt-a-grandparent program	Retirement homes, senior citizen groups
Mentoring programs	Business leader groups, other service organizations
Storytelling	Retirement homes, senior citizen groups
Tutoring program	University/college student organizations

Individual Member Form

Thank you for your interest in joining PTA! Please fill out the form below and return it to the appropriate person at your local PTA (president, membership chair, etc.) along with your dues payment. When PTA gets involved, children benefit. When you get involved with PTA, the child who benefits most is yours.

PTA asks demographic questions to better gauge the needs of our members. Demographic information will be used in overall categories (aggregate).

Local PTA name _____

Prefix (Dr. Miss. Mr. Mrs. Ms.) _____ First name _____ Last name _____ Suffix (Jr. Sr. II III) _____ Gender _____

Home address 1 _____ Home address 2 _____ City _____

State _____ ZIP/PC _____ Country _____ Primary phone number _____ This phone number is for _____
 My home My workplace Other (please specify) _____

E-mail address _____

How many years have you been a PTA member? _____ To how many PTAs do you belong? _____

How many school-age children do you have? _____

What are their ages? Child 1 _____ Child 2 _____ Child 3 _____ Child 4 _____ Child 5 _____ Child 6 _____ Child 7 _____ Child 8 _____ Child 9 _____ Child 10 _____ Child 11 _____ Child 12 _____

Which of the following positions do you hold within your school?

- None Local school board member State board of education member School employee

If you are a school employee, please indicate position:

- Teacher Principal Superintendent Other _____

School grade level

- Preschool Elementary Middle/junior high High school

School name

If you are an elected official, please indicate on which level you serve:

- Municipal County Region State Federal

Occupation:

- Stay-at-home parent Agriculture, forestry, & fishing Mining Construction Manufacturing Transportation & public utilities
 Wholesale trade Retail trade Finance, insurance, & real estate Services Public administration Other _____

Employer

Year of birth

What is your race?

- American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black or African American Hispanic or Latino Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 Caucasian Other _____

Highest education level completed:

- High school or equivalent Some college but not a degree Associate degree Bachelor's degree Master's degree
 Doctorate degree Other _____

As a thank you for being a valued PTA member and for completing this information, which free items would you like to receive from PTA?

(Check as many as you like. You must provide your e-mail address to receive any/all items.)

E-mail address (if not provided above)

- A free, one-year trial subscription to the online version of *Our Children* magazine
- National PTA Weekly* electronic newsletter (by e-mail) to stay informed about
- News within the association
 - Resources available on www.pta.org, observances and special events
 - Materials from partner organizations
- This Week in Washington* electronic newsletter, when Congress is in session, to learn about legislation that affects families and public schools (by e-mail)
- Exclusive PTA member benefits and sponsorship information (i.e., discounts, special offers, promotions)
- Parent involvement resources
- Leadership training (e.g., e-learning courses, information on convention, etc.)
- Participation in the Member-to-Member Network, the grassroots advocacy system that provides direct contact by PTA members with members of Congress and occasionally with federal regulatory agencies.

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