

PTA PROGRAMS

Quick-Reference Guide



Welcome2

Keys to a Successful Program Year3

Creating and Implementing PTA Programs6

Setting Program Timelines21

PTA Programs and Resources24

Welcome

Welcome to PTA leadership!

Your role as PTA program chair carries a good deal of responsibility, but it is also a wonderful position to have. You are about to embark upon an enriching, challenging, and fulfilling opportunity to support your community's school and children.

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 does not replace—the materials you receive from your state PTA.

PTA is striving to meet the needs of today's parents by bringing them together to speak on behalf of every child and by offering them the best tools to help their children be successful in school. We hope this quick-reference guide becomes an invaluable tool as you work for children and families.

Keys to a Successful Program Year



Overview

PTA programs can take many forms. This quick-reference guide applies to the projects, activities, and events that you organize and host throughout the year. The main purpose of any PTA program should be to support student learning at home and in the school, and to build relationships between and among families, school staff, and community.

No matter what their background, parents who are involved with their students' education are more likely to see their children

- Achieve higher grades and test scores
- Enroll in higher-level programs
- Be promoted and earn credits
- Adapt well to school and attend regularly
- Have better social skills and behavior
- Graduate and go on to higher education

PTAs are uniquely positioned to help millions of parents strengthen their awareness of the importance of parent and family involvement in education. Through effective programs, PTAs can increase skills and knowledge, change attitudes and behaviors, and create opportunities for parents, families, and the community to support student success.



What Is a Program?

A PTA program can be

- A system of projects or services intended to meet a public need;
- A plan comprising a series of steps to be carried out or goals to be accomplished;
- A course of study;
- A public performance or series of public performances; or
- An organized set of activities directed toward a common purpose or goal.

Whether it conducts a one-time event/presentation during a monthly PTA meeting, the ongoing Reflections Program, Teacher Appreciation Week, or a short-term or year-long plan to increase membership in PTA or parent/family involvement in schools, your PTA should be able to answer the following questions about its programs:

- Did the program meet its goal?
- Were there benefits or changes for individuals or community members from participating in the program?
- Did the program strengthen PTA's image, voice, and value in your school and community?

Regardless of the type of program, effective planning is essential for creating programs that children, families, and communities will enjoy and benefit from. The resources needed to support these programs (money, time, volunteers, space for activities, etc.) are often limited, requiring program leaders to think creatively.

Programs should be planned in response to a need or priority of the school community. Each program should be appropriate for the audience and take into account the diverse needs of families related to accessibility, scheduling, languages, cultures, and family structures.

The programs must be relevant, have clearly defined goals, and, when appropriate, be sustainable over time.

To pull all this together, your PTA needs to have a team that will focus on the creation and implementation of programs.



The Program Planning Committee

The program planning committee builds the framework for a successful program year. The purpose of the committee is to create and facilitate the execution of carefully-thought-out plans. With a positive attitude and an exciting program, the committee can help generate enthusiasm and motivate other parents and community members to get involved.

If you already have a committee in place for planning programs, make sure that it is representative of the entire school community, and that the committee members can dedicate enough time to the planning process.

If you don't already have a committee in place, create one that will allow you to tap as many resources as possible. Make sure your planning team reflects the community you are trying to reach. Consider including students, business leaders, men, single parents, cultural leaders, multilingual members, etc.

The optimum size of the team will vary depending on the size and needs of your PTA, as well as the programs your PTA is thinking of hosting. If the team is too large, it may become inefficient; if the team is too small, the members may burn out.

The program planning committee will be responsible for

- Planning effective programs based on the needs and input of the school community;
- Obtaining approval from the PTA executive board and/or membership;
- Keeping records of and reporting on program-planning activities;
- Conducting program-related business at general PTA meetings;
- Facilitating the execution of program plans;
- Working with other committees and school administrators;
- Spreading the word about programs through PTA meetings and PTA and school websites and newsletters;
- Encouraging participation in the program; and
- Responding to questions.



TIP

Tips for Success

- Invite all families to participate in PTA programs—not just those who have participated in previous events.
- Collaborate with the principal and community leaders in the planning of each program. These leaders can contribute valuable ideas, and their involvement in the planning process will make them more invested in the PTA programs.
- Thank everyone who participates, from volunteers to donors and attendees.
- The PTA president and treasurer should handle any money spent or earned as advised in the *PTA Money Matters Quick-Reference Guide*.

Creating and Implementing PTA Programs



Overview

Your PTA should have an outline for how to plan to help it develop effective programs and implement those programs efficiently. The following planning outline—or model—defines the key steps involved in designing, delivering, and evaluating a program.



10 Steps for Creating and Implementing a PTA Program

- Identify needs and priorities.
- Establish goals for your program.
- Define the scope of your program.
- Determine how to deliver the program.
- Create a budget for your program.
- Develop a plan of work.
- Decide how to distribute the work.
- Secure support and resources.
- Get the word out.
- Deliver the program.
- Evaluate the program and follow up.



Identify Needs and Priorities

Effective program planning is informed by the needs, wishes, and desires of the beneficiaries of the programs. Students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members all need to be heard.

Assess needs by conducting surveys, holding focus groups, and/or talking with representatives of each group of stakeholders. Then gather the results to determine how best to reach the stakeholders. Knowing what your audience really needs will guide the program plan.

As you plan, focus on the thing(s) your PTA can reasonably expect to accomplish, and be specific about what needs your program will address.



Establish Goals for Your Program

The program planning committee should define clearly what a program is designed to accomplish. Such a foundation will help build support for the program and make it possible to evaluate the program's success.

- Formulate goals that are S.M.A.R.T.: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely.
- Put each goal in writing and share it with the PTA leaders, PTA membership, and school principal.
- Revisit the goals along the way. Throughout the planning and execution of the program, stop to check whether you are on track to meet the goals.
- Revise goals as needed to reflect the actual time frames, specifics, and measurable outcomes of the program. Goals may change and evolve based on what you learn in your planning phase.
- Communicate the goals to the school community and potential volunteers and donors so people know why the PTA is implementing the program and why they should be involved.



Define the Scope of the Program

To plan a program efficiently, a PTA must first define the scope of the program.

- Will this be a one-time event or a year-round effort?
- What size audience do you hope to attract/involve?
- Will community members as well as parents and school staff be able to participate?

The scope of the program may be defined in part by the resources available to carry it out. A yearlong campaign to promote healthy lifestyles or the development of a volunteer management program such as Three For Me to increase parent involvement would require

more planning than a one-week event such as PTA Take Your Family to School Week. Know what resources you have and what you can reasonably commit to each program.



Determine How to Deliver the Program

To reach the most people, include a variety of events, activities, and delivery methods in your program (when resources permit). Possible program formats include the following:

- A guest speaker, video presentation, or panel discussion on a specific topic
- Monthly newsletters or fliers sent to parents and families
- A resource fair focused on a specific topic, such as health and safety, parenting, or after-school programs
- An open house, parents' night, or community forum
- A poster, essay, or oratory contest
- A yearlong campaign
- Advocacy efforts

As you decide how to reach the school community, review past programs to determine what was successful and what was not. Again, consider the community's needs and the committee's goals.

Before undertaking any financial enterprise, a PTA should check with school, local, and state authorities to determine whether the planned activity is prohibited by state or local law or by school policy, or whether the PTA requires any special permit.



Tip: Gather Input from Everyone You Want to Reach

It would be a big mistake to choose a program and decide how to deliver it without making sure that the target audience for the program has had an opportunity to provide input. While it is often helpful to start a conversation with just a small group, as the plan develops, try to create opportunities to get feedback from the larger school community. Effective program planning is a collective process and requires input from a variety of stakeholders.

Getting more people involved through surveys, meetings, and one-on-one conversations will significantly increase buy-in and participation, as well as improve the quality and relevance of the program.

Be as inclusive as possible in the planning process. Remember, parents aren't the only stakeholders. Invite principals to planning meetings, welcome their input, and share information with them along the way. Also reach out to community groups, legislators, and school boards to communicate plans, share resources, and celebrate successes.



Create a Budget for Your Program

Even though some individuals, organizations, and businesses in the community may be willing to donate many of the items you need to run a program, you need to estimate how much the program will cost. Not only will this information be useful in soliciting donations, but also it will also help in allocating monies from your PTA treasury for items not donated and keep you on track financially.

Budget Worksheet

The sample budget worksheet on page 11 is designed to help you account for most of the costs of implementing a program. Remember, one size does not fit all. Budgeting for a one-time Math Night will be different from budgeting for a year-round parent involvement program such as Three For Me or the Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence certification program.



Develop a Plan of Work

Once the program planning committee has determined the community's needs, decided on the committee's goals, and discussed the scope and delivery of the program, it must create a plan of work. This plan of work must be approved by the PTA executive board.

The plan of work will help the committee think through the specific steps that must be taken to carry out the program, the timeline for executing the program plans, the overall budget for the program (as well as the budget for each specific activity or step), and the resources necessary to put the plans into action. A Plan of Work worksheet can be found on page 13.

Sample Budget Worksheet

Item or Service	Estimated Cost	Potential Resource [WHAT KIND? FINANCIAL?]
<p>Planning</p> <p>Needs assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group • Surveys <p>Planning meeting</p> <p>Volunteer recruitment</p> <p>Volunteer/staff development</p> <p>Publicity</p> <p>Other</p> <p>Planning Subtotal</p>		
<p>Operation</p> <p>Program materials</p> <p>Printing, duplicating, and photography</p> <p>Office supplies</p> <p>Janitorial services</p> <p>Child care services</p> <p>Transportation</p> <p>Space rental</p> <p>Prizes/incentives</p> <p>Film/picture development</p> <p>Other</p> <p>Operation Subtotal</p>		
GRAND TOTAL		

This page has been left blank so that
the previous page can be removed.

Plan of Work

Officer/Chairman Name: _____
 (Nombre de Oficial/Presidente de Junta)

Position: _____ Year: _____
 (Posición) (Año)

Responsibilities/Duties: (Responsabilidades)			
Goal: (Meta)			
Specific Action Steps (Proceso Especifico de Acción)	Start Date (Fecha de Empezio)	Completion Date (Fecha de Terminación)	
Budget: (Presupuesto)			
Resources: (Recursos)			
Evaluation Process: (Proceso de Evaluación)			
Committee Members: (Miembros del Comité)			

This page has been left blank so that
the previous page can be removed.



Checklist: Planning an Event

If you are planning an event or activity, don't forget to do the following:

- Determine what role parents and other family members will play, and what role the school will play.
- Set a date, time, and place that has taken into account the school calendar and family circumstances, such as work schedules, that might be a barrier to participation.
- Use a variety of tools to publicize the event.
- Make sure the site for the event is accessible and appropriate for the event. If the school is not the best venue, consider other locations.
- Make sure the site has the necessary audiovisual equipment, lighting, chairs, and tables.
- Make arrangements for parking, refreshments, and child care.
- Determine who will be responsible for all aspects of setup, tear-down, and cleanup.
- Celebrate and publicize your success.



Decide How to Distribute the Work

The entire program planning committee will likely be involved in the decision making to this point. After the committee has identified what needs to be done to make the program a reality, however, it must decide how to distribute the work. Consider the following models:

- **Full-committee participation.** The entire program planning team participates in the planning for every event or activity in the program plan. This approach requires committee members to volunteer a significant amount of time, but may result in greater investment in the program by committee members and greater participation by the various stakeholders.
- **Subcommittee structure.** Smaller groups (comprising members of the program planning team or additional volunteers headed by members of the team) are charged with planning particular program activities. This approach requires less time on the part of committee members and offers leadership opportunities to

more people. It is important, however, to make sure that the smaller groups are diverse and reflect the communities they serve.

- **Executive board model.** The executive board completes the planning for every activity. This approach allows a PTA to streamline the planning process, and could be appropriate if the PTA doesn't have the time or volunteer resources to spread the work out. This approach is least likely to generate buy-in or investment from the stakeholders you are trying to reach and could send a message of exclusiveness rather than inclusiveness.



TIP

Tip: Establish Clear Expectations

Whether the program is an ongoing initiative or a one-time event, make sure that the program plan is detailed and that everyone who has a role to play feels “in the know.” Set clear expectations for the program planning committee regarding the plan, the timeline, and the resources the PTA will commit to the program. In addition, clearly define roles and responsibilities for volunteers.



DETAILS

Secure Support and Resources

Effective program planning will require volunteer time, and may require financial resources, equipment, information to distribute, etc. Some programs will require the help of school staff. During the planning process, determine what resources you need to conduct your program, and secure commitments before the planning is finalized. If you are unable to secure the resources you need, adjust the program plans accordingly.

Be specific when you invite businesses and community organizations to participate. You may ask for their time, their products, or a donation of funding, food, or equipment.



TIP

Program and Project Funding Sources

Annual membership dues are the primary source of funds for PTAs; some PTAs are able to do excellent work with no financial resources other than their dues. However, special projects and

programs may require additional funds. If dues are not sufficient to finance a PTA's work, supplementary funds may be raised within the context of the Mission and Purposes of the PTA.



DID YOU
KNOW?

Sponsorship vs. Endorsement

Corporate sponsorship is a funding mechanism in which a commercial concern provides cash, products, or know-how to a charitable or educational organization in return for an acknowledgment of thanks. The acknowledgment of thanks generally takes the form of public recognition for the sponsor's support.

Corporate sponsorship activities stand in contrast to endorsement activities, in which charitable or educational organizations endorse the products or services of commercial concerns.

In return for sponsorship, a PTA may thank the sponsor for its contribution; the thank-you may be in writing or on posters, banners, or other appropriate media. The written acknowledgment must be limited to an expression of thanks and can list identifying information for the sponsor. The acknowledgment can never make a qualitative judgment regarding the sponsor or its product, and it cannot request that people patronize the sponsor or buy its products; otherwise, the sponsorship payment will be subject to federal income tax.



DETAILS

Get the Word Out

People must know about your program in order to participate. Identify the most effective means to invite people to participate and attend. Use multiple communication tactics:

- Print information in the school or PTA newsletter.
- Post information on the school or PTA website.
- Make personal telephone calls.
- Ask the principal to spread the word in classroom visits, staff meetings, and other communications.
- Advertise in the newspaper.
- Post announcements at the school, local library, grocery stores, banks, etc.

- Circulate fliers in the community.
- Arrange for public service announcements on local radio and TV stations.



Deliver the Program

Deliver the program to the school community: Launch the campaign. Distribute the information. Host the events or activities.

Welcome and thank all participants. At the end of the event, or at strategic points during the campaign, distribute a brief feedback form to all participants to evaluate the success and usefulness of the program. A sample feedback form is provided on the next page.

Don't forget to send thank-you notes to speakers, panelists, donors, businesses and organizations, the principal and other school staff that provided assistance and resources.



Evaluate and Follow Up

Look at the goals you established at the beginning of the program and the responses on the feedback forms.

- Did the program meet its goals?
- Did participants find the program useful?
- Did the program encourage action?
- How might the program be improved?

Follow up by publishing a summary of the event and the outcomes of the program in a newsletter, or post the summary and outcomes on the school or PTA website. Celebrate your successes. Consider distributing resources to people who were unable to attend.

Participant satisfaction forms should be tailored to ensure consistency with the kind of program and the intended outcomes. The sample form on page 19 could be used to evaluate a Building Successful Partnerships presentation, Teacher Appreciation Week events, or any of your PTA's programs.

Sample Participant Satisfaction Survey

Participant's Name (optional) _____

Activity _____

Date _____

1. Did you enjoy or benefit from the activity?

- a. Yes, very much
- b. Yes, somewhat
- c. Not as much as I hoped I would
- d. No, I did not

2. Did you get the help you needed?

- a. Yes, completely
- b. Yes, for the most part
- c. Not really
- d. I did not need help.

3. Would you recommend this program to others?

- a. Yes, definitely
- b. Probably
- c. Maybe
- d. No

4. Why did you participate in this program /activity?

- a. I thought I would learn something new.
- b. My child was involved.
- c. The topic was important to me.
- d. I had some free time.
- e. Other (Please specify.) _____

Sample Participant Satisfaction Survey

5. In your own words, what was the most important thing you got out of the program?

6. In your own words, what would you have left out of the program?

7. What suggestions do you have for improving this program/activity?

I am a (check all that apply): Parent Family member Principal Teacher
 PTA member Student Community member
 Other (please specify.): _____

Thank you for your participation!

Setting Program Timelines



DETAILS

Overview

For some programs and events, the timeline is determined by the needs and interests of the stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, school leaders, the business community, etc.). Timelines also may be determined by the group that developed the program your PTA wants to adopt.



TIP

Timeline Tip

When setting your timeline, avoid conflicts with religious and cultural observances. In addition, check the school and community calendars to find out what other events are planned and when. There may be opportunities to partner on activities with other community groups. You don't want to force the school community to choose between your event and others, which may happen if events overlap or if there are a lot of events within a short period of time.

Timelines also may be influenced by PTA and national observances related to the program topic. Check PTA's calendar of events at www.pta.org for a list of PTA events and other observances that can guide your planning.



STEP BY
STEP

Building a Timeline

- Start with the end date in mind.
- Work backward to figure out the dates by which specific planning activities must be done.
- Build in time to spread the word and get people interested.
- Allow time for unexpected situations that may delay the planning process. For instance, make sure that someone else can sign checks if the treasurer is unavailable when a bill needs to be paid.



Sample Timeline: PTA Community Health Fair

Let’s say a PTA has a year-round healthy lifestyles program, and a part of the program is a community health fair held in the early summer. Here is an example of a timeline that works backward from the event date, Saturday, June 2. The countdown helps identify what, how, and when tasks need to be completed.

By the week of April 30	
What:	Form a planning committee that may include students, parents (PTA and non-PTA members), a teacher (preferably the health or physical education teacher), the principal, etc.
How:	Decide whether to issue an open invitation to join the planning committee or personally invite key people; communicate the date, time, and location of the first meeting. Have an agenda for the meeting, and be prepared to build consensus and action plans.
By the week of May 7	
What:	Ask businesses and community groups to donate giveaways, health information (brochures or other literature), coupons, food, space, or time. Find companies or healthcare organizations that can offer hands-on experiences.
How:	<p>Talk to local businesses and organizations about the health fair; tell them how the fair will benefit the community. Communicate your PTA’s plans and ask the businesses if they would like to be involved. Discuss with them what they could provide that would meet one of the PTA’s needs. Ask them to post fliers announcing the fair (the fliers should indicate who should attend and when and where the fair will be held). Exchange contact information and thank them.</p> <p>To prevent multiple volunteers from approaching the same businesses and organizations, assign each volunteer on this task a specific area or group of businesses.</p>

By the week of May 14	
What:	Start communicating activities and details to school staff and all families in the school community.
How:	Use all communication vehicles available to get the word out about the health fair. Post announcements on the school website, run ads in the school and PTA newsletters, send e-mails to all parents and PTA members, make phone calls to community leaders, promote the event when talking to friends and neighbors, remind people of the fair during other events, and so forth.
By the week of May 21	
What:	Notify the local media about the health fair.
How:	Provide the who, what, when, where, and why of the event to local radio stations, television stations, community blogs, and newspapers.
By the week of May 28	
What:	Gather the supplies you will need for the fair.
How:	<p>Coordinate trips to supply stores, as needed. You may need decorations and sign-making material. Plan to pick up any tables, chairs, or rental equipment at this time (arrangements should have been made earlier in the month).</p> <p>Check in with volunteers and businesses that will be contributing time or goods.</p>
By the week of June 2	
What:	Set up and host the health fair.
How:	<p>Set up tables, booths, ticket desks, and refreshment areas. Hang signs and decorations. Arrange space for people to walk and congregate.</p> <p>Greet the vendors, volunteers, and participants. Have volunteers circulating through the fair to troubleshoot.</p> <p>Collect feedback and let attendees know what will happen as follow-up to this event.</p>

PTA Programs and Resources



Overview

Your state PTA may have well-established programs that your PTA can implement. In addition, the national PTA organization has developed and compiled resources, tools, program models, and advocacy tips for three focus areas: healthy lifestyles, parent involvement in education, and arts and culture. All PTA programs encourage and support opportunities for parents, families, school staff, the community and other caring adults to be involved in the healthy growth and development of children and youth. Each focus area covers a number of specific topics identified by national research as important to supporting the academic and healthy development of all children and youth. Imbedded in all of PTA's programs is the notion that parent involvement is the vehicle through which your program goals will be achieved.



PTA Program Topics

Improving Health and Wellness

- Food and nutrition
- Physical activity
- School safety (bullying)
- Media and technology awareness and safety

Supporting School Success

- Supporting learning at home and school
- Improving communication between home and school
- Creating a welcoming school environment for all families
- Participating in schoolwide decision making
- Advocating for change
- Collaborating with community to support student learning

Promoting Arts Education

- Reflections
- Start the Art
- Advocating for arts education in schools
- Cultural enrichment
- Grassroots advocacy



TOOLS

PTA Programs and Tools

The tools, programs, and special events PTA has created to support these focus areas include the following:

- The *Healthy Lifestyles at Home and School Notebook*
- Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification
- Building Successful Partnerships tools and resources
- National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement in Schools
- The Phoebe Apperson Hearst–National PTA Excellence in Education Partnership Award
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- PTA Take Your Family to School Week
- Reflections Program
- Start the Art
- Three For Me
- The Mary Lou Anderson Reflections Arts Enhancement Grant Program

For detailed information about these programs, go to www.pta.org.



TOOLS

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs

In 1997, the national PTA organization built on the work of Joyce Epstein, who identified six types of parent involvement, and adopted these types of involvement as standards for parent/family involvement programs. These standards were intended to serve as

a tool for schools and PTA leaders in developing meaningful parent involvement programs. These standards were endorsed by nearly 100 professional education and parent/family involvement organizations, state departments of education, colleges of teacher preparation, and school districts.

The *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs* booklet is a practical tool to help school communities implement the standards. In 2007, updated standards will be issued.

For more information about the national standards, visit www.pta.org/standards.

Program Resources in PTA's Back-to-School Kit

The PTA Parent's Calendar

One challenge for PTA leaders is to identify and implement activities, events, and programs that meet the needs of members. The PTA Parent's Calendar, included in the 2007–2008 Back-to-School Kit can help you meet that challenge. You can use the PTA Parent's Calendar to communicate your unit's plans to members and other parents. Each month's calendar page has space to include PTA meetings, school events, community activities, and other valuable information. Already included on the calendar are PTA national events and other national celebrations (as well as links to resources on those observances); these national observances can be kept or deleted, depending on your unit's needs. Share the Parent's Notes for each month in a separate handout or in a monthly newsletter.

Every time parents look at the calendar pages, they'll be reminded of PTA, what PTA does for their students and their school, and what a great advantage it is to have PTA in their lives. The calendar will also remind parents about specific PTA events. Finally, the calendar and tips may be a catalyst for parents to schedule family outings or to take an extra moment or two to talk with their children.

The PTA Program Planner Toolkit

The PTA Program Planner Toolkit CD-ROM includes a customizable version of the PTA Parent's Calendar, as well as three archived program resources: the *Healthy Lifestyles at Home and School* notebook (from 2005), the *Program Planner Notebook* (from 2006), and the *PTA After-School Week Leaders' Guide* (from 2005). These resources can be printed out and used to help plan your PTA's programs.



PTA Program Tip

PTA comprises more than 5.5 million members, all of whom aim to strengthen their schools and communities to benefit children. By creating effective programs that are aligned with the Vision, Mission, and Purposes of PTA and that focus on health and wellness, school success, and arts education, you strengthen PTA's ability to demonstrate how local PTA action can have a national impact on ensuring the future of America's children and youth—one community at a time.



Contact Us

Contact your state PTA or the PTA Office of Programs and Public Policy for guidance, support, and answers to questions.

PTA National Headquarters

541 N. Fairbanks Court
Suite 1300
Chicago, IL 60611-3396
Phone: (312) 670-6782
Toll-Free: (800) 307-4PTA (4782)
Fax: (312) 670-6783
E-mail: info@pta.org
Website: www.pta.org

PTA Office of Programs and Public Policy

1400 L Street N.W.
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005-9998
Phone: (202) 289-6790
Hotline: (888) 425-5537
Fax: (202) 289-6791
Website: www.pta.org



(800) 307-4PTA (4782)

www.pta.org