

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT PACKET

For the

Membership Chair

Or

VP for Student Involvement/Youth Advisor

Involving Students in Your PTA/PTSA

Why involve students? Questions and answers about student involvement and your PTA.

1. Why should our PTA unit involve students?

- To put the PTA objective into action.
- To provide a new perspective on your PTA's Ideas and Programs.
- To give students the opportunity to participate in the planning and execution of PTA programs; young people's viewpoints and ideas are essential because all PTA's programs focus on youth.
- To give students a better understanding of adults and adults a better understanding of students, thereby bridging the generation gap.
- To teach students useful skills, such as public speaking, decision making and conflict resolution.
- To introduce students to the legislative process through your PTA's involvement in legislative activities.
- To provide your unit with information regarding student interests and problems. This will make your programs more effective.
- To encourage students' personal growth and development.
- To increase the number of skilled volunteers in your PTA so you can conduct more programs.

2. Are students genuinely interested in PTA involvement?

Students are genuinely interested in improving their communities, their education and the world in which they live. PTSA offers them the means to realize these goals through legislative advocacy and programs. If belonging to PTSA means providing young people with the opportunities to develop leadership skills, communicate with policy-makers and contribute to their schools and to their communities, then they will be sincerely interested.

3. What if we try to recruit students and they aren't interested?

The first few attempts at recruiting students may be difficult. Students may have an outdated image of PTA as an organization composed of mothers. As with any group that has previously been excluded from or uninvolved in an organization, you will have to make special efforts to recruit them (incentives, making meeting times conducive to students, ie: right after school, finding reps from student council, appealing to students not currently involved in after school activities), and you may have to persevere despite initial setbacks.

Our PTA wants to become a PTSA

How do we do that?

Changing from a PTA to a PTSA requires an amendment to your PTA's bylaws. You will need to read the bylaws to determine the proper procedure. Although it is a simple amendment to add "Student" to "Parent-Teacher Association," making it a "Parent-Teacher-Student Association," the usual procedures governing amendments must be observed. What follows is an example; feel free to adapt it according to your unit's needs.

1. Appoint a committee to study the question. (The Bylaws committee may serve in this capacity.) Invite students to attend the committee meeting(s) at which youth membership will be discussed. Inform the membership committee that you are exploring the question of including students and invite comment. This may be done through your PTA newsletter.
2. At the committee meeting, have an open discussion. Discuss the pros and cons of adding youth members. Meeting times, procedures, and duties of current members may have to be changed to accommodate students. The bylaws should be reviewed to determine if additional changes will be needed.
3. The committee's recommendation, including any amendment(s) to the bylaws, should be made to the executive board.
4. The executive board should vote to recommend the change(s) to the association. The membership must receive 30 days' prior notice of any proposed amendment(s) to the bylaws. This may be done through your newsletter, a special flier, or at an association meeting 30 days (or more) prior to the meeting where the vote will be taken. The motion to amend the bylaws requires -- a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.
5. If members approve the change, the bylaws need to be amended and submitted through channels for approval.
6. After your unit becomes a PTSA, advertise for students to join and attend meetings. This can be done through an article in your school newspaper or by passing out fliers and posters.

Remember, it's important that your unit actively involve students. If your commitment is honest and total, it will work. The committee may decide to change the bylaws further, by adding a student component/positions. Some things to consider while working with the committee to change the bylaws are the following:

IMPORTANT LEGAL ISSUES FOR STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:

- Students should not sign binding contracts with consultants, businesses, or other entities.
- Students should not receive or disburse funds.
- In matters that involve legal contracts, students should not vote.
- Students should be involved in goal setting.
- Adult leaders should mentor students.
- Leadership opportunities should be developed for students.
- Provide opportunities to engage students in program and event organization.
- Support students to make community connections.
- Students should receive recognition for the work they do.
- Student roles should be clearly defined and communicated
- Youth should have a designated adult advisor.
- Students should be trained to attain necessary skills to complete assignments
- While performing PTSA duties, students should be chaperoned.

Laying the Groundwork

These are a couple of common questions from PTSAs:

We want to get students involved in our PTSA -- but where do we start?

Our PTSA recruited some students last year -- how do we get them on equal footing with adult members?

Here are some practical steps to take toward meaningful student involvement. Although they are listed in chronological order, feel free to adapt them to your PTSA's needs.

STEP #1: Discuss student involvement with your PTSA's executive committee or board. To stimulate discussion and thinking, you may want to use the Assessment Questionnaire.

STEP #2: Once your board has agreed to actively recruit student membership, have it make a formal commitment to youth involvement. This should be in the form of a motion or an action item. Review the guidelines stated above and consider whether a change in your bylaws is necessary.

STEP #3: Promote student membership. Advertise PTSA activities, the advantages of student participation, etc., to parents, students, teachers, and the community.

STEP #4: Include students on PTSA committees.

STEP #5: Develop and implement programs that involve both students and adults. Make sure students are included in the initial planning stages as well as in the execution of the projects.

STEP #6: Allow students to have an active voice in your PTSA. Listen and give consideration to what students have to say, even if their ideas seem unorthodox or impossible to implement.

STEP #7: Elect students as officers as pertaining to the guidelines. Consideration should be given to electing students as officers or to having an elected student position on the executive board.

Things to Consider

A PTSA can provide enrichment, academic and cultural experiences for all students.

A GUIDING PHILOSOPHY:

- Blend leadership.
- Shift job responsibilities so students get trained.
- Practice effective positive communication skills, including non-verbal communication.
- Acknowledge and address all concerns.
- Encourage and allow student input in discussions of issues.
- Consider students' viewpoints -- their ideas are valuable.

ADULT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Attain the goals of total student involvement by making no distinction between student and adult members. Focus on doing "with" rather than "for."
- Elect student(s) to serve as member(s) of the nominating committee.
- Involve students as equals in planning programs, membership enrollment campaigns, and in all action-oriented committees.
- Identify students by their function (e.g., chairman, co-chairman) and not by a label (student co-chairman).
- Provide an atmosphere of mutual respect between adults and students so that issues may be discussed honestly and resolved fairly.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Communicate with adult members on the needs and concerns of fellow students. This will ensure clear, swift actions to remedy any problems.
- Interact with other students to plan meaningful programs and activities that will enhance the atmosphere on your campus, and help create a more positive learning environment for all.

Represent students and PTSA at school board and other civic meetings, wherever student input is needed or requested.

Student Involvement Awareness

MEMBERSHIP RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Students, upon payment of full membership dues, have all membership privileges and responsibilities.

OFFICERS AND CHAIRMEN:

Students who are willing and have the time may serve as officers in the PTSA within the stated guidelines. All officers, adults and students alike, must perform duties of the office as outlined in the bylaws.

BYLAWS:

When the bylaws are changed making the unit a PTSA, provision should be made if possible for at least one position on the executive board to be filled by **a student 16 or older**, or where appropriate a Youth Advisor. Your unit bylaws should be reviewed for further information -- amendments: officers, election of the nominating committee and elections. It is strongly recommended that the entire bylaws -- each article and section -- be reviewed

NOMINATING PROCEDURES:

At least one student should serve as a member of the nominating committee. When considering a person for any office it is always best to make sure the person understands all of the duties of the position.

Recruitment and Retention of Students

Some helpful hints about recruiting student members:

- Ask for help. Most students are willing to help if asked.
- Stress PTSA results. Students need a mental picture of how things in their schools and communities will be improved by their participation.
- Publicize all PTSA achievements, benefits, and upcoming activities through surveys, literature, forums, or social events.
- Set up a bulletin board with pictures and notices of PTSA programs in a high-traffic area of the school or community.
- Keep people who make referrals, such as counselors, administrators, and teachers, informed of PTSA programs for students.
- Make a presentation before the student council stressing the advantage of PTSA membership for students. Enlist the council's support and listen to members' ideas for involving students.
- If possible, start with a core of students who are already involved in PTSA. Use them as your recruitment/public relations team.
- Have a student be membership chairperson or assist with your membership drive. Encourage student members to recruit their peers.
- Emphasize that PTSA can be fun, using logos, T-shirts, music, and drama to spark interest.
- Hold "each one reach one" recruitment drives. Students should be part of the recruitment process as well as its result.
- Conduct campaigns to educate students about the needs they can meet. Provide information about the PTSA's education programs and legislative initiatives.
- Make sure the administration and school commitment to PTSA is clear to all students.
- Demonstrate support by providing public awards for student involvement via news media, announcements in student newspapers, assemblies, etc.
- Concentrate on attracting students who might not ordinarily participate.
- Show potential recruits how PTSA activities relate to special interests such as art, music, writing, and conservation.
- Stress the following basic benefits:
 - Feeling good about helping the school and community.
 - Being with friends.
 - Learning new skills.

Adapted from National PTA "Annual Resources for PTA's"

Helpful hints about retaining student members:

- Provide students with the means to evaluate their PTSA experiences. Make sure students see that steps are taken to address their criticisms or requests.

- Avoid segregating student members.
- Everyone must have the attitude that student involvement is going to work - that it will succeed. Students, parents, and teachers must be willing to work together.
- Create a supportive atmosphere in which students and adults listen to one another, express their views openly and share their expertise.

Sample Letter Inviting Students to Join PTSA

PTSA Letterhead

Dear Student:

Do you want to make a difference in your school, home and community? Do you wish you could have more say in what happens in your school? Do you wish parents and teachers understood your needs better? Do you want to work on an equal footing with adults -- have equal rights and responsibilities?

You may not realize it, but the PTSA offers you these kinds of opportunities. The PTSA is one of the largest volunteer organizations in the world. Its 6 million members range from parents and teachers to administrators, students, community leaders and senior citizens.

Too often, adults attempt to decide what is best for young people without consulting them. The PTSA is one of the few youth-focused organizations that actually gives its student members equal authority, equal responsibility -- and an equal vote.

Through PTSA involvement, you can gain leadership experience and learn new skills, such as conflict resolution and goal setting. You can also improve your school and community by organizing and participating in PTSA programs.

Join (name of _____) PTSA. Your perspective will be invaluable.

NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD:

(date, time)

(place)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

(name)

(phone)

RESOURCES

National PTA

Attention: Youth Membership Conference

330 North Wabash Avenue, Suite 2100

Chicago, IL 60611-3690

(312) 670-NPTA www.pta.org

Michigan PTSA

Michigan PTSA,
7402 Westshire Drive Suite 115
Lansing MI 48917
Phone: 517-622-4782 www.michiganptsa.org

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT STATEMENT

It is the responsibility of the PTSA to create opportunities for the effective involvement of youth.

OBJECTS OF THE PTA:

- To promote the welfare of children and youth in the home, school, community, and place of worship.
- To raise the standard of home life.
- To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.
- To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth.
- To 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

MISSION STATEMENT

Along with the objects and mission of Michigan PTSA, the youth strategic planning committee of the Michigan PTSA Mission/Vision Statement:

Our vision is with students involved, the Michigan PTSA is a collaborative organization of students and parents.

Local PTSA units and councils who involve students are intergenerational collaborators and empowered advocates.

Students involved in the PTSA will become empowered advocates and good citizens.

Student Involvement Assessment Beginning of Year

The following is a tool to assist PTA/PTSA's in assessing student involvement in local units and councils. The Michigan PTSA will use the information provided to compile student involvement successes to be shared with other units.

Directions:

1. Make one copy for your files.
2. Fill out the assessment immediately upon receiving. This assessment will serve as student involvement baseline information.
3. Mail or fax a copy to the Michigan PTSA upon completion, retaining a copy for your files.

Mail: Michigan PTSA
7402 Westshire Dr. Suite 115
Lansing, MI 48917

Fax: 517-622-4788
Phone: 517-622-4782

Local Unit: _____
Region: _____ Unit ID Number _____ Students are in grades _____ through _____.

Students serve on the Executive Committee. Yes No

Students are members of committees. Yes No

Students serve as committee chairs or co chairs. Yes No

The PTA/PTSA has a student involvement committee. Yes No

List the top 5 activities/programs that the PTA/PTSA provides for students of which the students are not involved in the planning and implementation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List the top 5 **current** PTSA activities/programs that students actively participate in the planning and implementation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List **new** student involvement activities/programs that the PTSA plans to implement during the current year.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Student Involvement Assessment End of Year

1. On June 1, fill out the saved copy.
2. Mail or fax a copy to the Michigan PTSA upon completion, retaining a copy for your files.

Mail: Michigan PTSA
7402 Westshire Dr. Suite 115
Lansing, MI 48917

Fax: 517-622-4788
Phone: 517-622-4782

3. Use the baseline assessment and the end of the year assessment to evaluate the PTSA's student involvement activities and programs.

Local Unit: _____

Region: _____ Unit ID Number: _____ Students are in grades _____ through _____

Students serve on the Executive Committee. Yes No

Students are members of committees. Yes No

Students serve as committee chairs or co-chairs. Yes No

The PTSA has a student involvement committee. Yes No

Did the PTSA find the contents of the student involvement packet useful. Yes No

Which part(s) of the student involvement packet were most useful?

What information could be included in the packet to make it more useful?

List the top 5 PTSA activities/programs that students actively participated in the planning and implementation. Place an asterisk (*) before the activities/programs that were new this year.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

The type and focus of activities/programs changed when students were involved in the planning and implementation. Yes No

The participation of students in activities/programs increased as a direct result of students being involved in the planning and implementation? Yes No

Program planning and management skills for students involved in planning and implementation improved. Yes No

The adults who assisted students in planning and implementation understand the value of student involvement? Yes No

MICHIGAN PTSA
Youth Conference Member Application

FULL NAME: _____ AGE: _____ GPA: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____, MI ZIP CODE: _____

Home Phone Number: (____) ____ - _____ Other Phone: (____) ____ - _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Name of PTA/PTSA Unit(s) you are a member of:

City: _____ Region: ____ I am in: Middle School/Jr. High High School

Name of the School you attend: _____

Explain why you would like to serve as a member of MPTSA Youth Conference:

Explain your involvement in PTA/PTSA at your local unit and/or council (dates if possible):

Volunteer Experience (dates if possible – does not have to be PTA/PTSA):

Special Skills and/or Work Experience (dates if possible – does not have to be PTA/PTSA):

Awards/Achievements earned (dates if possible – does not have to be PTA/PTSA):

Interests and Hobbies:

Tell us a little about your family:

As a member of the Youth Conference, there will be meetings you need to attend. If you do not drive, do you have some form of transportation to be able to attend these meetings?

YES (almost always) NO (almost never) USUALLY (most times)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

I acknowledge that my son/daughter is applying to be a Youth Conference Member in MPTSA.

Signed (Parent/Guardian): _____ Date: _____

