

Partnership in Education

How School Boards and PTA's Can Work Together to Support All Children

Partnership, teamwork and cooperation - these are the building blocks of education leadership today. Nowhere is partnership more urgently needed than between school boards and parents.

School boards are responsible for taking the lead in identifying the community's education needs and meeting those needs through local school board policy. When parents and teachers join together in PTA, they can become better informed, better organized, and more effective partners in working with school boards to achieve quality public education.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

According to the MSBA, the vision of a school board should "with community input, envision the educational future of its community and then formulate the goals, define the outcomes, and set the course for its district." Working with PTA's and other parent groups within its district, a school board can ensure community voices are heard.

How can this be done?

- Consider inviting parent representatives to serve on district committees such as:
 - Curriculum
 - Early Childhood
 - Community Education
 - Special Education
 - Calendar
 - Health and Wellness
- Invite PTA representatives to attend school board meetings. Share policies on how to address the school board at meetings or get an item on the agenda.
- Ask for PTA input on issues of importance to the local school district (ie. school boundaries)
- Create a formal parent involvement policy for your district. Find ways to make parents feel invited, involved and important.

COMMUNICATION

A strong school board "uses ongoing, two-way communications to build trust and support among community, board, superintendent, staff, and students."

How can this be done?

- Share school board member contact information with PTA's and a calendar of public meetings.
- Educate parents on which decisions the school board has the authority to make, and which are school-based or administration-based decisions.
- Assign school board members as ambassadors to each school and PTA. Have board members attend PTA meetings, school assemblies, carnivals, etc.
- Keep community members informed of board actions and policies, and allow for parent input when appropriate.

ADVOCACY

The mission of the MN PTA is to “support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children.” PTA’s are encouraged to seek opportunities to advocate for children and youth in our public schools. A school board can support the PTA by acknowledging and supporting their efforts.

How can this be done?

- While PTA’s cannot endorse or promote a particular candidate for school board office, they are encouraged to host public forums or share other forms of communication to inform voters about the candidates prior to election day. This is also encouraged for state or national legislative elections.
- PTA’s are allowed to participate in levy or referendum campaigns, provided they have a majority vote from members agreeing to the position.
- Fundraising is an important function of a PTA. Often, the money raised goes towards expenditures that would typically be paid for by a district. Acknowledging these efforts goes a long way in promoting a positive relationship between school boards and PTA’s.
- Local PTA’s are encouraged to keep their membership informed of important educational issues in front of local, state or national governmental bodies, and advocating where necessary. Some districts have Legislative Action Committees comprised of parents and community members, with the support of the school board and district administration, to advocate together for issues concerning their students.

School boards do a better job when they are challenged and supported by an informed and involved community. PTA bylaws encourage participation in the decision-making process to develop school policy. In learning to work with your local PTA’s, understand their value as a partner in communication, advocacy, and parent involvement. Working together, PTA’s and school boards can create a strong support system for all children and their families.

Minnesota PTA has over 200 local units and three area councils across the state. It provides support, leadership, training, parent education, advocacy and programs to thousands of Minnesota parents and students. With a volunteer board, and part-time staff, MN PTA is dedicated to providing a voice to all children.



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