

**GUIDELINES**

PTA Communications and public relations should help PTA members and the general public understand that the PTA is:

- A volunteer organization of parents, teachers, students and other concerned citizens; and
- An action-oriented organization working for the well-being of children and youth.

**PURPOSES OF PTA PUBLICATIONS**

- Encourage involvement with the child in the home and in the school.
- Inform every family in the school of the aims and accomplishments of the unit.
- Encourage attendance at PTA meetings and parent involvement in PTA projects and activities.
- Foster cooperation with the school in keeping parents informed about school functions...
- Inform the community about PTA activities and school functions.

**PTA PUBLICATIONS**

- Adhere to PTA noncommercial, nonpartisan and nonsectarian policies. (Background for Communications 6.2.2, 243 and Basic Policies for All PTAs 1.3, 13)
- All material is to be cleared with the PTA president and school principal before printing. The principal is responsible for the accuracy of school information and compliance with the State Education Code and school district policy.
- The PTA president is responsible for the accuracy of PTA information and compliance with PTA policies.
- Never present material critical of any individual or group. To do so may very well expose the PTA to a libel suit.
- Avoid publishing the last name and phone number of a volunteer who handles PTA funds.
- Only publish a summary of actions taken from the PTA association meeting.
- Do not publish, without written permission, personal information about students or adults. This includes:
  - Photographs of students or adults (with/without first or full names);
  - Home addresses and/or telephone numbers of students and adults.
  - Email addresses of students or adults.
  - Student or adult class schedules (e.g., Art work by John L., 3<sup>rd</sup> grade).
- Date all materials.

- Always make it easy for the reader to identify and find you. List the following items:
  - Name of the PTA district, council or unit;
  - Contact information (units should use school address, PTA districts and councils should use office or mailing address);
  - Names of PTA levels to which you belong (PTA council and district, California State PTA, National PTA).
  - Most importantly, include an e-mail address and phone number so that you can be reached for more information about your organization.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING CONTENT**

- Feedback is necessary to find out whether your publication is achieving its goals. Take an opinion poll at an executive board meeting. Insert a questionnaire in several issues to learn which information is most helpful to your readers.
- Encourage others to contribute to your Web site. Tell them how much space is available for articles.
- Make suggestions that encourage others to contribute.
- Be on the alert for coming events that should be publicized. Go after stories.
- Report the results of events, publicize membership campaigns, or announce PTA award recipients.
- Remember, people don't read, they skim. Make sure your message is easy to find. Keep things brief and to the point. Strategically use bullets, quotes, charts, and graphics.
- Graphic design (both print and electronic) should be clean and simple. Avoid graphics that overwhelm the reader and distract from your content.
- Proofread everything!

**TRANSLATING MATERIALS**

- PTAs must work closely with the school to meet the language needs of all who receive the publication.
- To translate information and materials, seek help from bilingual parents on your executive board, teachers, or support personnel in the classrooms or the school district, or the foreign language departments at local high schools, community colleges and universities.

**ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS: WEB SITE**

When designing a Web site, remember less is more.

Think strategically about the content and design of the site. The most important step in site development is navigational design and planning. How you structure your site will deter-

- Mine whether users can access the information that they need.
- Plan for maintenance. If you have funds allocated for your Web site, do not spend your entire budget on the initial development.
- Every page should have a purpose. The quality of each page is determined by how well it serves its purpose.
- Determine if the Web site will be hosted through a county office of education, your school district, or paid for by your PTA. Obtain bids from at least three service providers.
- Whether the Web site construction will be done commercially or by a volunteer:
  - Forward your edited copy (preferably on computer disk) by the expected date;
  - Mark a sample hard copy so your instructions are clear;
  - Keep a duplicate disk back-up of the copy submitted; and
  - Beta test before the pages are posted publicly.
- Links to California State PTA and National PTA Web site information are typically more cost and time effective than repeating the same material.
- If the PTA has a web site, the eNewsletter is an easy way to promote the site and generate new users. Keep the eNewsletter brief; provide shore summaries of new information available on the site; and include links to the specific pages being discussed. This allows the reader to get a preview and jump to the site easily.
- When sending an eNewsletter, be sure to use a “text-only” format. HTML-formatted newsletters/e-mails are incompatible with some e-mail systems and may break on arrival and, in some cases, may overload the user’s system. In addition, there are some e-mail users who will automatically ignore or delete HTML-formatted messages. (Sample eNewsletter Fig. 6-2)

#### WEB SITE COORDINATOR

- Review [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org) and [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)
- Subscribe to *PTA in California. The Communicator* and *Our Children* (Resources and Subscriptions in the introductory section of the California State PTA Toolkit). The cost of PTA subscriptions is a legitimate PTA expense.
- Follow your PTA district or council guidelines and attend workshops for publications chairmen.
- As the new editor of a Web site, gather all available information from your predecessor. Review past issues. Study Web sties from other PTA districts, councils, and units. Secure samples from PTA district or council. (Online Communications 6.2.5)
- Include the cost of materials; paper, ink, computer software, etc., in the unit budget.
- Set Web site deadlines and stick to them. Advise contributors of the due dates frequently. Ask the PTA president to include the item “Web site article

assignments” and “publication copy due dates” on all meeting agendas.

- Encourage officers and chairmen to keep you informed about their projects and urge them to contribute shore articles and reports for the newsletter. Advise all potential contributors that material will be edited for space and form (grammar, punctuation, spelling and accuracy of information) for your publications.
- California State PTA materials may be reprinted, please credit the source. Read National PTA materials carefully to determine when permission to reprint is required. Observe copyright laws by obtaining permission to reprint all non-PTA materials. (Sample Request for Use of Copyrighted Material 6.2.2, 244; Fig. 6-1, 245)
- Keep a well-organized procedure book, including the following information, for the next coordinator:
  - Number of postings
  - Copy deadline for eNewsletter, and Web updates
  - Materials, supplies, software and equipment
  - For electronic medium: Internet service provider, e-mail account names and passwords, Webmaster name and address
  - PTA district and council publication chairman contact information. Advise your PTA district and council if you post a Web site.
  - Contact information for Webmasters for the California State and National PTAs to establish a link from their Web sites to yours.

#### CONSIDERATIONS FOR YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS

- Develop a plan to reach all members whether they are on-or-off –track.
- Post Web site changes before track goes off and right after track returns.

#### NEEDS TO LEARN

- PTAs history; Purposes of the PTA, Mission statement of the California State PTA; California State PTA Core Values; California State PTA Legislation Platform; and the PTA’s basic policies, procedures, and programs. (Know Your PTA 1.1, 1 and Legislation Platform 4.2.4, 101)
- About the local media: who they are, who is interested in PTA issues, and how to contact them.
- Current PTA information, publications, names of officers and chairmen, and schedule of events.

#### NECESSITY

- The addresses, and telephone numbers, and e-mails of PTA officers and chairmen.
- Helpful tools: computer with internet access.
- Reference materials: grammar book, dictionary, thesaurus and *California State PTA Toolkit*.