

CONTACT

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Cover photo:

Pictures from National PTA Convention. Photos courtesy of Dorothy Gardner.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE By Donna Petiford, Missouri PTA President



“What if...the cure for cancer was trapped inside the mind of someone who can't afford an education?”

When I first joined PTA sixteen years ago, I was the parent of a kindergartner and I was excited to help in any way because I wanted to recreate special memories of my school days for my daughter. I remember fondly my mother serving as a PTA leader at York Elementary School in Springfield and especially her role as home room mother. We enjoyed making cupcakes together for classroom parties so you can imagine my disappointment to find that my daughter's school no longer allowed homemade snacks in the classroom. Forced to find other ways to stay involved, I discovered that PTA is so much more than cupcakes. I discovered that it is so important for parents to be more than involved, we need to be fully engaged in all aspects of our children's education.

I didn't let that first disappointment discourage me, and even though I have met many disappointments in my PTA journey, I remain focused on the mission of our organization and our purpose for existing. I've been busy advocating, not just for my child, but for every child to have a quality education. I believe our public school system can deliver that quality and I have used my voice to convey that message to every elected official in my district, in Jefferson City and in Washington, DC.

I have also spent the last several years dedicating my time and energy to helping other PTA leaders develop their full potential. If I have helped just one struggling mom or dad who is trying to balance career, parenting and PTA, then I can be satisfied with a job well done.

This is the last edition of the *Contact* with me as the Publisher. Our succession plan for the Missouri PTA includes my term as President ending at the conclusion of our Convention in October. I am looking forward to having some extra time to do other things that I enjoy, but I will admit, I will miss being your state president. This position has afforded me an oppor-

tunity of a lifetime. I am grateful for the opportunity and for the people who have supported me throughout my term. I am looking forward to supporting the next group of Missouri PTA leaders as a "resource on call" as their immediate past-president.

Please make plans to join me, the Missouri PTA Board of Managers, National PTA Board leaders and other PTA leaders throughout the state at our convention in Springfield, October 18-20, 2013. I look forward to hosting this event in my home town and I promise to make you feel right at home. Our intent is to help you help the children at your school and to help make your time as a PTA leader a little easier, so that you will "Love PTA, More than Ever"! I hope to see you at Convention in Springfield in October!

Sincerely,
Donna Petiford
Missouri PTA President (October 2011-
October 2013)

Who We Are

PTA Vision
Making every child's potential a reality

PTA Mission ~ PTA is:

- A powerful voice for all children,
- A relevant resource for families and communities, and
- A strong advocate for the education and wellbeing of every child.

PTA Purposes

- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community, and place of worship
- To raise the standards 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 teacher may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth
- To develop between educators and general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education

National PTA elects First African-American Male President

By National PTA

Mr. Otha Thornton was installed as president of the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), making history as the first African-American male chosen to lead the association. The ceremony took place at the PTA's annual convention at Duke Energy Convention Center in Cincinnati, where he addressed the more than 1,000 attendees in his first official speech in the position.

"This is an exciting opportunity, and I am proud to have been elected to lead the charge for parents and teachers across the nation, and to ensure that our children have the tools and support they need to succeed," Thornton said. "As president, I am committed to expanding PTA's membership, leadership development and advocacy efforts to strengthen the association and fully empower families, teachers and communities to advocate for all children."

Mr. Thornton brings unique experience and extensive involvement at all levels of the PTA to his leadership role. A retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel who earned the Bronze Star Medal for exceptional performance in combat operations in 2009 and 2010 during Operations Iraqi Freedom, he and his family have lived all over the world, and his two children have been part of school systems in Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Texas, as well as the Department of Defense Schools overseas.

"We are thrilled to welcome Otha as president,"



said Eric Hargis, executive director of National PTA. "His extensive leadership experience in various PTA roles across the country and globe bring a dynamic perspective that will energize the National PTA's continuing work to promote children's health, well-being and educational success through strong parent, family and community involvement."

Mr. Thornton previously served on the Georgia PTA Board of Directors and on the PTA's national Board of Directors. He currently resides in Savannah, Georgia, with his wife of 20 years.

"The PTA is critical in bringing the voices of parents to the forefront on issues, working together to strengthen school safety, provide kids with healthy, nutritious lunches and implement consistent learning goals across the country," Thornton said. "Parents are an essential voice in the education reform debate, and we need to be much more than an audience. We need to be partners in the education of our children, and I am looking forward to engaging with diverse communities across the country to ensure that all parents have a voice in their children's education."

Nominees for election at the 2013 Missouri State PTA Convention:

PRESIDENT ELECT:
Dorothy Gardner



Dorothy joined the Board of Managers as a Regional Director in 2006. Since that time, she has continued to serve as *CONTACT* Editor, VP & Director of Communications and currently serves as VP & Director of Legislation and Advocacy. Prior and during her service as a state board member, Dorothy has and continues to stay involved with her local and council PTAs in Liberty. Since her oldest child started Kindergarten she has volunteered in a variety of committee chair positions and been an elementary, junior high, and council president.

During her years as a PTA member she has earned the Leadership, Atlaw and the Distinguished service award. In addition, Dorothy authored the Improved Infrastructure Resolution that was adopted by both Missouri and National PTA.

Professionally, Dorothy owns Structure Inc. and is part owner and CFO of Gardner Construction Company Inc. She graduated from the University of Missouri with a BA in Administration of Justice and performed her graduate work in the field of Information Science. After many years, she went back to school to study accounting in order to better assist her with the family company.

Dorothy, originally from Saint Louis, resides in Liberty with her husband Bryan and their children Nick, a sophomore at Mizzou, and Meagan, a sophomore at Liberty High School. In her spare time she can be found at the ice rink skating or running the trails in Liberty.

Norvel has been involved with PTA since 2006.... with Hickman Mills School District in Kansas City, Missouri where she has held many positions: Warford Elementary PTA (Membership Chair, President, Treasurer), Center of Differentiated Education PTSA (Membership & President), Smith Hale Middle School (PTSA President). Norvel has also attended 1 National PTA Convention & 2 Emerging Minority Leadership Conferences. Norvel is very involved with her community, volunteering with the YMCA, Carondelet Health Foundation and Boys & Girls Club of Kansas City. She has enjoyed every opportunity to work with Missouri PTA & National PTA.

Norvel has served Missouri PTA as an Emerging Minority Leadership Conference Chairperson and as a Regional Director for the Three Trails Region supporting Raytown, Hickman Mills, Belton, Raymore Peculiar & Grandview School Districts.

Norvel's family life consists of her husband of 16 years (Samuel) and two boys (Bryce 9 & Samuel 12) which is the reason why she's involved with PTA. She got involved with PTA because she is the P that makes the organization what it is today.

SECRETARY:
Norvel Johnson



TREASURER:
Lori Prussman



Lori has been involved in the St Joseph School District PTA for 20 years. She started out as a volunteer when her daughter, Candice, started kindergarten. When she started asking questions at Kindergarten round-up the PTA moms took notice and the rest is history.

Lori's first year she was an unofficial member of the executive board, and when the nominating committee started planning for the following year, she was asked to be President. I believe her exact words were, "Are you crazy? Me get up in front of everyone and speak?" As a compromise, she became First VP for a year, then president the following two years. After her time as president, she was approached by the St Joseph PTA Council. She has since held most of the Council positions (not only once but twice as Council President). She has also held many chairmanships on the local, council and state levels. Lori has also served on the Missouri State board as a Programs Chair and currently as one of the Pony Express Regional Directors. Besides PTA, Lori has also served on various other boards and committees—all of which have children front and center in their missions.

When her husband, Dennis, married her 26 yrs ago, he never imagined that his shy wife would be doing all these things. But God has a plan and she gladly follows the path that is laid out before her.

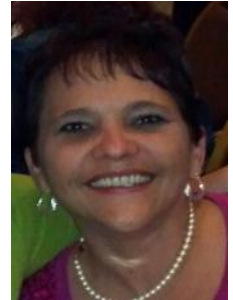


Vice President of Legislation and Advocacy: Angel Davis

Angel has been involved with PTA for eight years in numerous elected offices and chair positions at the local and council level. Most recently Angel has served as the Missouri PTA Resolutions Chair. During her tenure in this position, Angel has co-authored resolutions for the state as well as submitted resolutions to be considered at the National level. Angel has advocated for Missouri’s children with congressmen in both Washington D.C. and Jefferson City. She has also testified before the Missouri Senate Education Committee. Angel resides in the Meramec Region where she works for her school district’s pre-school program.

Vice President of Membership Services: Michele Reed

Michele Reed has 14 years of PTA experience. She has held various committee chairs at the local level as well as local unit president and local unit Treasurer. She has served Missouri PTA as Regional Director of the Three Trails Region, State Reflections chair and most recently as the Vice President and Director of Programs. Michele works for the Raytown C-2 School District as a program specialist on the SIS Team. Michele lives in Blue Springs, Missouri with her husband Brandon. Her daughter, Gracyn, is a Senior at Blue Springs High School and her son, Blake, is an 8th grader at Brittany Hill Middle School. In her free time, she works at a concession stand at the Royals stadium to raise money for her children’s competition dance and baseball teams.



Vice President of Communications: Brigitte Lindstrom

Brigitte Lindstrom has been a member of PTA for 5 years. She has served as President and in several chair positions at Edison School and has served on the St Joseph council as Legislation, Reflections, and PTA University Chairs. Brigitte has also presided as council president. Advocating for children at the local level is a passion. Brigitte has also served for the past two years as the Public Relations Chair on the Missouri PTA Board of Managers. “I enjoy being able to serve the children of our state, but I really love walking through the halls of Edison School and seeing the smiling faces, hearing the greetings from the kids and seeing the impact we make in each of their lives daily.”

Vice President of Field Services: Catherine Sweeny

Catherine Sweeny lives in Wentzville, Missouri and has been involved in PTA for over 25 years. Her belief that being involved would benefit all children motivated her to join PTA. Her PTA experience ranges from holding most positions at the local unit and joining MOPTA board over 10 years ago. She has served at the state level as a Regional Director, IT chair and currently as the Director/VP of Communications.



Vice President of Programs: Susan Rupert

Susan Rupert has served on the Missouri PTA Board of Managers for the last six years in the positions of Pony Express Regional Director, Membership Emphasis Chair and most recently as VP of Membership Services. She served as a local officer of the Cameron PTSA from 2001-2011. She has been a secretary for Parkview Elementary in Cameron for five years and recently became a “retired” Girl Scout leader after 13 years. Susan and her husband John, have two children. John Michael is a sophomore at Cameron High School and is very active in Boy Scouts, band and soccer. Amanda is a freshman at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville where she is studying early childhood education with the goal of teaching kindergarten. Susan credits her family for her ability to serve PTA for the past twelve years. “It is because of their endless support and enthusiasm that I am able to continue volunteering to a cause I am so passionate about.”



Hear Us Roar

By Dorothy Gardner, VP and Director
Department of Legislation & Advocacy

PTA's origins have long been rooted in advocacy. Our founders, Phoebe Apperson Hearst and Alice McLellan Birney, joined together not because they thought it would be nice to organize a conference dinner for their school's teachers or fundraise to provide resources for their schools. Their mission in early 1897 was to eliminate threats that endangered children. Phoebe and Alice believed children should be in school instead of working in factories, and this led to PTA's earliest legislative agenda focusing on child labor laws.

While many of the threats children faced in 1897 have been confronted, children still face a variety of modern day threats to their well-being. Sure teacher meals and fundraising to provide excellent, and often much needed, resources are some of the great services PTAs provide. But, it is also up to us to speak out and stand up for every child's well-being. Children do not vote and they lack the means to hire lobbyist to make sure their needs are represented. But, they do have us – parents, teachers and community members who will advocate on their behalf.

So how does a unit/council incorporate legislation and advocacy into their general activities? First find someone to be the legislative chair. No experience is required, just a passion to speak up for all children. The Missouri PTA Department of Legislation & Advocacy has worked hard over the last few of years developing tools to make the legislative chair's job easier.

The Legislative Handbook is the main resource every legislative chair should have in their possession. Information on the role of PTA at the national, state and local level is explained, a check-off sheet on how to be a legislative chair will get your legislative chair underway, and guides on how to conduct a Kid's First Town Hall or submit a resolution are included. Each month (September – May) a Suggested Legislative report is emailed to all unit/council presidents and legislative chairs. This monthly tool outlines events and happenings related

to legislation and advocacy at the local, state and national level. How you utilize this tool is up to you. Have your chair use this as a guide to give a report at a meeting, or cut and paste pieces into your own newsletter or other correspondence. The Missouri PTA website has a section dedicated to legislation. Under the Legislation tab you will find resources in the form of links and electronic tools to help you in your endeavors. Each Missouri Legislative Session the Capital Chatter page publishes a Bill Watch list. This list outlines the bills PTA is keeping an eye on in Jefferson City and the resolution and/or positions that back up our support or opposition.

Did you know it only takes 10 emails/ phone calls to a legislator to get their attention? There are multitudes of paid lobbyist in both our state and national capital working hard to make sure their organization or company voices are heard. Sometimes their agenda does include measures that are good for kids. When French fries and catsup were listed as vegetables on the school lunch menu did you shake your head and wonder why? The Healthy Hunger Free Act had clearly laid out measures that would have barred such a classification. However, lobbyist representing the powerful potato and tomato growers and companies applied pressure on our federal legislators to make sure these two items would remain classified as vegetables in the school lunch room. They were unwilling to lose such a lucrative business even if it meant sacrificing children's health.

PTA sends out Action Alerts when our member's voices are needed, and these Alerts are only sent when our collective efforts will be most effective. When issues arise PTA looks to its mission & purposes, resolutions and positions to find its voice. This voice, or stance, along with a request for action is emailed out to all unit/council presidents and JC/DC members. Remember those 10 emails/phone calls? This is when your voice and the voices of your unit's members really can make a difference.

Just recently the National Assessment of Educational Progress released its finding on a four-decade study. They found students are improving in the areas of math and reading. It was also noted the achieve-

ment gap is shrinking. While this is great news, these improvements are not enough to keep the US from continuing to slip in relation to the rest of the world. In another study recently conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit, out of 50 nations the US ranks 17th, falling behind Finland, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, the U.K., the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, Canada, Ireland, Hong Kong, Australia, Poland, Germany and Belgium.

Education cannot be reformed in a way that truly benefits all children unless parents, teachers, community members and legislators work together to develop balanced and meaningful solutions. We are all part of the equation and should all be part of the solution. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, is a big supporter of PTA and believes in our mission. As an invited speaker during the last PTA Legislative Conference Secretary Duncan said he viewed the PTA as a sleeping giant and now was the time to wake up and let our voices be heard.

Making sure every child's general welfare is protected and has access to quality education is a key component to our nation's infrastructure. It is not enough to only focus on your own children's or school's success. The children of today will be tomorrow's government leaders, inventors, entrepreneurs, teachers, providers, protectors, employers and employees. They will shape what tomorrow looks like in the United States. Now is the time to join together our collective voices. Now is the time to roar for all our children.



PTA REFLECTIONS
40 Years of Achievement in the Arts

2013-2014 Reflections Theme:
“Believe, Dream, Inspire”

HOW DO MISSOURI'S CHILDREN RANK?

By Erin Brower, Director of Advocacy & Public Policy, Partnership for Children

Despite improvements in education, Missouri's overall ranking of child well-being worsened according to the 2013 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The report ranks all 50 states and the District of Columbia on the following 16 indicators:

Economic Well-Being	Education	Health	Family and Community
Children in poverty Children not attending preschool Low-birthweight babies Children in single-parent families	Children whose parents lack secure employment Fourth graders not proficient in reading Children without health insurance Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma	Children living in households with a high housing cost burden Eighth graders not proficient in math Child and teen deaths per 100,000 Children living in high-poverty areas	Teens not in school and not working High school students not graduating on time Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs Teen births per 1,000

Improvements in fourth grade reading proficiency, eighth grade math proficiency, the number of children attending preschool and high school students not graduating on time helped to move Missouri from a ranking of 24 to 21 in the area of education. However, the overall child well-being ranking of 27 brings the state down one notch from last year's ranking of 26, showing that there is still a lot of work to be done to improve the quality of life for Missouri's children.

MISSOURI'S CHILDREN

	2012	2013
Overall Rank	26	27
Economic Well-Being	21	22
Education	24	21
Health	33	32
Family and Community	27	26

The latest data shows that 306,000 Missouri children are living in poverty, while 446,000 children have parents who lack secure employment. Another risk factor for poverty shows 444,000 children living in households with a high housing cost burden. The impact of the recession is still being felt by families across the state of Missouri.

In the health domain, Missouri ranks as the 32 worst state in the nation. There is much needed room for improvement regarding the number of Missouri children without health insurance, which has remained steady since 2008, with current numbers at 95,000. Child and teen deaths per 100,000 improved since 2005, as well as teens who abuse alcohol and drugs. However, the number of low-birthweight babies has worsened since 2005. Current statistics reveal 6,286 (8.2%) babies born in 2010 met this criteria. Compared to normal birthweight infants, low-birthweight infants are more likely to have: low oxygen levels at birth; problems maintaining body temperature; difficulties feeding and gaining weight; infections; breathing and respiratory problems; gastrointestinal problems; and intellectual and neurological impairments.

Missouri has seen a jump from 32% to 35% of children living in single-parent families, as well as an increase from 5% to 9% of children living in high-poverty areas. The Family and Community domain ranking improved due to better numbers of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma (from 13% to 11%) and teen births per 1,000 (jumping from 42 to 37).

We must continue improving in these areas because children whose parents don't have a high school diploma face the highest odds of living in chronic poverty. Moreover, children who are born to teen mothers are more likely to: be classified as low-birthweight; be premature; suffer abuse and neglect; have lower language and math skills; show deficits in social and emotional skills; experience more problems in physical well-being and motor development; drop out of high school; become teen parents; and spend time in prison.

The data shows that a strong commitment to Missouri's children is imperative to improving all areas of child well-being. Want to help improve the data by advocating for Missouri's children? Please contact Erin Brower at brower@pfc.org.

Partnership for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, multi-issue advocacy organization committed to improving the lives of children and youth. Partnership for Children produces the annual *KIDS COUNT in Missouri Data Book*, which documents the status of children in Missouri and provides county-by-county indicators of child well-being.

To view the national *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* and the *KIDS COUNT in Missouri Data Book*, please visit www.pfc.org.

National PTA Convention

By Angel Davis, Resolutions Chair and
Linda Klender, Secretary

The 117th National PTA Convention was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, home of the Reds, the Purple People Bridge, the Bengals and where pigs fly.

This year's convention was exciting and groundbreaking. New national PTA officers were elected and installed. We listened to the candidates' speeches and participated in multiple run-off voting. When all the votes were counted, Missouri was well represented on the National Board. Missouri PTA past-president Tina Zubeck was elected to the office of Secretary-Treasurer, Missouri PTA past-president Kathy Nevans was elected to the National PTA Board of Directors for a second term and former student representative to the Missouri Board of Managers Bill Potts-Datema was elected to the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. The 117th National PTA Convention also saw history made as Otha Thornton took office as the first male African-American National PTA President. President Thornton spoke to delegates focusing on diversity, advocacy and leadership.

Missouri PTA also took part in a call-in to our Washington D.C. elected officials regarding the need to support effective family engagement in our schools. Our delegates also took part in the debate of resolutions brought forth before the convention. Resolutions on meningococcal vaccinations, recess in our schools and AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators) were adopted during this convention. National PTA's website (www.pta.org) has copies of these resolutions.

Delegates also attended workshops on topics ranging from Reflections to Membership to Treasurer to Legislation and Advocacy and more. Missouri student representative Meagan Gardner was chosen to attend the 1st Annual Youth Summit in conjunction with convention. One of the highlights of the Youth Summit was a town hall panel on bullying featuring Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan and guest speaker Kari Byron of Myth Busters.

Missouri PTA recognizes and values the importance of attending and participating in the National PTA Convention. The Missouri PTA delegates were honored to represent the Missouri PTA membership and be their voice to the National PTA Convention.

Proposed State Convention Resolutions

TABOR

Rational: Initiatives such as TABOR ("Taxpayer's Bill of Rights") and TELS ("tax and expenditure limits") are constitutional measures designed to limit state revenues by instituting a highly restrictive revenue formula. This formula does not adequately measure the cost of inflation for public services such as education and public health programs creating permanent revenue shortages. In states where TABOR measures have passed the effects on education and services to children were devastating. Significant decreases to education and public health funding resulted in overcrowded classroom, decreased graduation rates, textbook shortages, dirty classrooms, reduced school lunch services, and the suspension of immunization programs. The Missouri school funding formula was designed to meet 100% fully funded by 2013. Currently Missouri's K-12 school funding formula is underfunded by \$660 million. Enacting TABOR and TELS initiatives would inhibit ability for the formula to reach a state of full funding and continue to leave school without adequate funding for education. Missouri PTA has a long history of supporting funding for public education and welfare services for children. TABOR type initiatives would constitutionally change the structure of our states general revenue income resulting in harmful effects on education funding and jeopardizing the general welfare of children.

Proposed Resolution

Whereas, The welfare and education of Missouri's children and youth has been a prime concern for Missouri Congress of Parents and its units and councils since its founding and continues today; and
Whereas, The Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers and its units and councils have consistently supported and urged the Missouri General Assembly to fund education; and
Whereas, Initiatives known as TABOR ("Taxpayer's Bill of Rights") or TELS ("tax and expenditure limits") have been introduced in the Missouri General Assembly that if passed would result in severe cutbacks in education and other service programs; therefore be it
Resolved, That the Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers (Missouri PTA), its units and councils, educate its membership and community about the consequences TABOR ("Taxpayer's Bill of Rights) and TELS ("tax and expenditure limits") would have on both education and services to children, and actively oppose their passage; and be it further
Resolved, That the Missouri PTA, its units and councils, work actively to deter any action that may have a detrimental effect on education funding and the welfare of Missouri's children.

Proposed Convention Resolutions con't from page 7

Mandatory Safety Drills In Missouri Schools

Rationale: The frequency Missouri schools practice safety drills is left up to the individual school district. Currently, the MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) requires schools to practice safety drills and report the date they were performed. This allows schools the option of practicing emergency drills very infrequently. The most powerful tool a school can have in a time of crisis is a well-prepared staff and students who know what to do during an emergency. It is the position of the Missouri PTA that schools should be required to develop and annually update their safety procedures and practice at least one safety drill per month.

Proposed Resolution

Whereas, There are currently no state requirements for the number of safety drills held by a school district each year, other than earthquakes, and schools frequently have new staff and substitutes in the building throughout the year and 65% of students will change school 2 or more times by the eighth grade leaving many transfer students unfamiliar with a building's safety plan; and

Whereas, The most powerful tool in an emergency is a school's safety plan, and plans should be assembled by teams including emergency management personnel, community partners and school-based staff and include components such as prevention-mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery; and

Whereas, The United States has the highest number of tornadoes per year with an average of 1,253 and Missouri averaging 45 tornadoes per year, and there were an average of 6,260 fires in school buildings during the years 2005-2009, and the number of threats from unprovoked violent acts occurring in or in the proximity of schools has increased in recent years; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers (Missouri PTA), its units and councils, encourage the Missouri State Legislature to require school districts to work with local and state emergency management personnel, community partners and school-based staff to develop and annually update detailed multi-hazard management plans; and be it further

Resolved, That the Missouri PTA, its units and councils, encourage the Missouri State Legislature to enact legislation requiring monthly safety drills, including but not limited to fire, tornado, earthquake, intruder/lockdown and evacuation, during the school year, with schools being able to alternate the type of safety drill each month; and be it further

Resolved, That the Missouri PTA, its units and councils, work with local school districts to encourage the proper training and education of staff, students and parents in regards to the school's multi-hazard management plans.

And that Resolutions Mandatory Fire and Tornado Drills in All Missouri Public Schools and Safety and Disaster Plans and Procedures be rescinded.

Original Resolutions

Mandatory Fire and Tornado Drills In All Missouri Public Schools

Whereas, The use of fire drills and tornado drills are left to the discretion of the local school boards without firm regulations; and

Whereas, Their potential lifesaving importance is sometimes minimized; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers urges the General Assembly to pass legislation requiring monthly fire drills and semi-annual tornado drills during the school year; and, be it further

Resolved, That the proper fire authority annually inspect each school, and supervise one such fire drill each year, and be informed of each school's emergency plan of operation; and, be it further

Resolved, That Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers urges school districts' compliance with the applicable provisions of the latest "Life Safety Code" of the National Fire Protection Association; and, be it further

Resolved, That the practice of bolting or chaining any marked exit when the building is occupied be prohibited and that push bars be installed if doors need to be locked to outside admittance in accordance with the law.

Safety and Disaster Plans and Procedures

Whereas, The safety of children and youth has always been a fundamental concern of this organization; and

Whereas, The development of safety and disaster plans and procedures for children and youth in

Whereas, We are challenged to seek to participate in the decision-making process establishing policies recognizing that the legal responsibility to make decisions has been delegated by the people to boards of education; therefore, be if

Resolved, That units and councils of the Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers, in cooperation with local school districts, initiate a thorough study of existing procedures in order to develop comprehensive Safety and Disaster Plans and Procedures; and, be it further

Resolved, That units and councils urge that these Plans and Procedures be established in written form, reviewed and updated as needed, distributed to appropriate personnel and made available upon request to interested patrons.

How to Listen to Your Kids: 4 Ways to Do It Right


By Richard David, Male Involvement Chair


When parents listen with interest, children feel that their ideas are valued and that they are respected. They develop a sense of self-esteem and confidence as they reason, "Since my parents believe I'm worth listening to, I must be a person of value and importance." How can you become a better listener?


1. Be attentive. Stop what you're doing as soon as you can and give your child your full attention. Make eye contact. Be sensitive to nonverbal cues, such as tone of voice and facial expression.


2. Encourage talk. Smiles, nods, and one-word responses indicate interest. Keep questions brief, open, and friendly, and try to avoid asking "why" questions. Listen; don't react.


Exclusive Offers for PTA/PTSA Members
Whether you're buying school supplies for the kids, picking up a flat screen television for your family, or purchasing a smart phone, PTA members can now start saving money thanks to National PTA's Member Benefits Provider Program and Missouri PTA special offers.


 Activate your PTA/PTSA Membership Card and receive 10% off school supplies and 25% off copy and print purchases at Staples stores.


 We're at the Airport and in your Neighborhood. The world's largest airport general use car rental brand, operating from approximately 8,500 locations in 146 countries worldwide is proud to offer PTA members up to 20% off using discount CDP# 1929580 every time you reserve. <http://www.hertz.com/>


 This program includes competitive benefits and superior discounts for members with attractive rates that could save you up to 15%. For more information see www.mylife.com/pta/.


 All of the products on the Sharp Electronics/PTA Member Store site are being offered to PTA members at extremely attractive pricing. Visit the PTA/Sharp Electronics member store at sharp-cart.com/ecom/affinity.htm?passCode=PTA.


 T-Mobile and the National PTA have partnered together to bring PTA members access to exclusive offers on wireless mobile service and equipment that you won't find in retail stores. <http://www.pta.org/members/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3572>

 Through its Build Your Dream Classroom program, Promethean will match the amount of funds raised by your PTA, up to \$3800, towards the purchase of qualifying products. With the PTA's support, schools can purchase Promethean's interactive whiteboards (ActivBoard), award winning Learner Response Systems (ActivExpression2, ActiVote and ActivEngage), and interactive tools (ActiView and ActivSlate) for use in the classroom. <http://www.prometheanworld.com/us/english/education/pta/>

 eTrak, the world's smallest location tracking device, is FREE to PTA parents. Plus, each subscription order earns a local unit \$6 and \$2 each for state and National PTA. It is the child safety solution parents have been looking for!

 Special ticket pricing on St. Louis Rams home games, includes \$10 food and beverage voucher. To order visit www.stlouislam.com/pta or phone Amanda Lutz at (314) 425-0528 promo code: PTA. Limited Available Tickets-Order Today!

 Special Ticket pricing on Kansas City Chiefs home games. See our website for seating chart and ticket prices. To order please call (816) 920-4893 or email your request to jordan@chiefs.nfl.com. Quantities Limited.

 Increase your membership and have a source of funds to support your PTA budget with little effort. When your parents join your PTA and your ItAllCounts program, ItAllCounts will reimburse your parents \$5 to help cover the PTA membership fee. There is NO cost for your PTA unit or members to join. ItAllCounts plugs your PTA unit and your members into the growth of e-commerce (online shopping) and is supported by over 700 retail/service providers. For more information visit <http://www.itallcounts.com/learnmore>.

3. Empathize. Try to put yourself in your child's shoes. This may take imagination and patience, but it will help you better understand your child's actions and reactions.

4. Listen with respect. Try to react to your child as you would to an adult friend. Listen at least as much as you talk. And face the fact, that at times, kids are complainers; sometimes they just need to get their grievances off their chests.

Learning to listen can help build closeness and connectedness with your children. It can also help them release pent-up emotions and strengthen their ability to make decisions and solve their own problems. Whenever you listen attentively to any person, you pay a high compliment showing that you value what he or she is thinking. So make an effort. Keep your incoming communication circuits open to those you love.

Pack the Room - Drawing parents to your general meetings

*By Dorothy Gardner - VP and Director
Legislation & Advocacy*

What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear 'general meeting'? If only items such as budgets, committee reports, and voting pop up in your head - the general business all PTA units must take care of in order to function - you might be missing out on a key opportunity to both sell your PTA to your parents and draw more attendees to your meetings.

Lets face facts. Most parents, probably yourself included, have very little spare time throughout the week. But time may not be the only obstacle your parents face. Before we can focus on drawing bigger crowds to meetings the obstacles that are keeping them away must be identified. Once you know what barriers your parents are experiencing it is easier to address and remove them.

Common obstacles include:

- Lack of child care
- Not enough notice
- Work and/or traffic issues
- Sports/dinner time & other time conflicts including bad time of day
- Topic (in most cases general PTA business) may not appeal to parents
- Language/cultural barriers
- General feeling of being overwhelmed during a meeting
- Have a negative view of PTA meetings
- Don't feel welcome or included

Next we need to really market what we are selling. Yes. we are selling something and no, it isn't wrapping paper. PTA's end product is engagement--engagement between our schools, parents and the community. Sure we can buy cool things with the money raised through fundrais-

ers, and the teachers do really appreciate dinners and classroom supplies. But, what really makes a difference in a child's education is how engaged are their parents. PTA provides the tools, resources and means for parents to become engaged. Often parents don't understand what PTA is and what it does. We need to spell this out, and not just once at the beginning of the year. Marketing your PTA should be a yearlong endeavor. We need to constantly promote what exactly we are doing for children and what we are doing for parents.

How, where, and when to market

How - Identify the best way to reach your parents. Is it by email, announcements, paper or a combination of methods. Keep correspondence friendly (employ large fonts), straightforward and to the point. Where - Take the message to the people. Don't expect them to seek you out. Advertise where the parents gather; in the drop off/pick up line, at after school/ extracurricular events, in the social media network.

When - Consistently and frequently. Use weekly email and social media, monthly newsletters, upcoming flyers, posters and signs at school.

So now that we've removed barriers and marketed ourselves what will draw them to the actual meeting? It's all about the main topic and if all your offering is a general business meeting even a fantastic door prize might fail to draw a crowd. According to Roberts Rules of Order (which all PTA's operate under), the IRS and the state of Missouri there are very specific instances when a 501(c)3 must involve the general membership in business affairs. These would be: adoption of the budget, election of the nominating committee, election of officers, amending bylaws and the annual meeting. Unless your unit's bylaws state otherwise, those are the only five business agenda items that require action by the membership. None of these five items need to be the main topic of the general meeting.

Your main topic or agenda item needs to

appeal to your parents. This could mean bringing in a guest speaker to talk about parenting issues and other topics of concern that matter to parents. Utilize your teachers to offer workshops on tips for homework help or demonstrate available school resources. Tap into the kid's enthusiasm and host a safety night, read in, family game night, art/music celebration, or international/cultural event. These are just a few ideas. The key is how you manage the agenda. Start with a welcome, maybe hold a door prize or raffle, and then briefly - and I can't stress this part enough - conduct any business that needs to come before the membership. Even if that business is simply a distribution of the current budget (great best practice to employ) and a reminder of any pertinent announcements. Close the meeting business and move on to the main reason parents turned out.

Already hosting similar events? Consider making them part of the general meeting rather than separate events. The reason is simple. By pulling more parents into a small part of PTA business you will demonstrate that your PTA is inclusive, run properly and a great resource. You just might find some future leaders who previously were inadvertently excluded from your PTA due to one or more identified barriers.

Finally, once you've established this new way of running a general meeting make it a consistent practice. Be sure to avoid confusion by marketing general meetings and executive committee/board meetings as separate types of meetings. Unless your bylaws state otherwise, it is a great best practice to invite the membership to also take part the executive committee/board meetings. Those who are interested in the more business end of PTA will attend. Parents will soon come to identify the PTA general meeting as an opportunity to learn something new, gain insight, and celebrate their children's accomplishments. It's a win-win for all, but those who benefit the most are the children.

Great Links From National PTA Convention 2013

By Donna Petiford, Missouri PTA President

National PTA Convention is a great time to learn about new programs from the association. This year's convention in Cincinnati, OH, was no exception. It was a great honor for me to attend the convention and I am excited to share some of the programs that National PTA highlighted during this year's event:

Family Reading Nights: free activities in English and Spanish that PTAs can use to organize events to engage the entire family and focus on improving reading skills between kindergarten and fifth grade. <http://www.pta.org/programs> (PTA Family reading Experience)

Schools of Excellence: National PTA has rejuvenated the School of Excellence program to help PTAs strengthen the family-school partnership and make measurable progress together in the areas of education, health and safety and arts and cultural exploration. <http://www.pta.org/programs> (Family Engagement-School of Excellence)

Common Core Standards & Parent

Guides: National PTA has been involved in the Common Core Standards from the very beginning. This link has a number of resources including a policy brief that will help PTAs understand the reasoning behind the Common Core Standards Initiative (CCSI). PTA has created Parent Guides in English and Spanish that are aligned with Common Core Standards at every grade level. These guides help families and schools work together to assure student success. <http://www.pta.org/parents> (Parent Guides to Student Success)

Fire Up Your Feet: a new physical activity program that encourages families to walk more to and from school—and in daily life—while keeping track of their steps, and raising money for their PTA or school. <http://www.pta.org/programs> (Health & Safety--Healthy Lifestyles)

Connect for Respect: tools that will help PTAs across the country to lead conversations in their school communities about bullying and how it is affecting their communities. These tools will help PTAs and communities work together to develop solutions that they can implement collaboratively together. <http://www.pta.org/programs> (Health & Safety--Safety--Bully/Connect for Respect)

Not in Our School/Not in Our Town: innovative ways to resist bullying and promote an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion. <http://www.niot.org/>

Fuel Up To Play 60: a program that empowers students to make healthy food choices and to be active for at least 60 minutes each day. Students can win prizes like a NFL player visit or Super Bowl tickets. <http://www.fueluptoplay60.com/>

It Can Wait: take the pledge to never text and drive. <http://www.itcanwait.com/>

Pathway to Financial Success: get funding to bring financial education to your classroom. <http://www.pathwaytofinancialsuccess.org/>

Take Action Alert: Convention attendees were encouraged to contact members of Congress to ask them to cosponsor the Family Engagement in education act. It's not too late for you to share this with your members and ask them to take action as well.

Heads Up-Concussion in Youth

Sports: information about concussions for coaches, parents and athletes involved in youth sports from the CDC. http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/ys_toolkit_ppt.pdf

I hope you will take the time to check out some of these great programs that you can implement at your school.

Please keep in mind that training PTA leaders is a great use of your PTA funds. Your next opportunity for training is just around the corner in Springfield, MO, October 18-20. I hope you will plan to join the Missouri PTA board of managers and our special guests from the National PTA Board of Directors. Your PTA and your entire school community will benefit from this training and networking opportunity!

<http://www.mopta.org/events/conferences/missouri-pta-convention.html>

Missouri PTA on the web & through social media

Find us online @ www.MOPTA.org

Like us on facebook @ Missouri PTA

Join us on Pinterest for some great ideas and while you are at it, share some of your own.

<http://pinterest.com/missouripta>

National PTA Back-To-School Kit

The Official 2013-2014 National PTA Back-to-School Kit has gone digital. Each local unit should have receive via postal mail a USB drive with all of the guides, forms, and templates they need to successfully run their PTA. The kit still contains great resources to help PTA leaders serve their communities and manage their local units, including: easy-to-use primers for the president, treasurer, and membership and programs chairs; membership, fundraising, and marketing tools; program and advocacy resources; and special offers from national partners. Go to PTA.org/backtoschool for more information about this year's kit.

Missouri PTA—Resources

Starting back to school - Have questions? Need Assistance?

Look no further.

Missouri PTA can assist you and your unit to ensure a successful school year.

Resources Available to MOPTA Units:

Regional Directors

Website

Board of Managers

MO PTA State Office

Let us know how we can help you!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

September

National School Success Month

National Preparedness Month

Baby Safety Month

- 1** Dues to State Office
Deadline for the following state awards:
- *Advocacy Through Legislation (Individual) Award (AtLaw)*
 - *Advocacy Through Legislation (Unit/Council) Award (AtLaw)*
 - *Leaders Project Application*

2 Labor Day - MO PTA Office Closed

8 Grandparents Day

9-15 Missouri Parent and Family Involvement in Education Week

11 Patriot Day

16 Stepfamily Day

17 Constitution /Citizenship Day

21 International Day of Peace

22 Fall Begins

27 MO PTA Early Bird Membership Award Date Postmark Deadline

28 Family Health & Fitness Day

October

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

1 Dues to State Office
Child Health Day

8 Columbus Day Observed
National Children's Day

18-20 **98th Annual Missouri PTA State Convention in Springfield**

21 MOPTA State Office Closed

31 Halloween

November

American Diabetes Month

National Homeless Youth Awareness Month

1 Dues to State Office

3 Daylight Savings Time ENDS

11 Veterans Day

21 Thanksgiving

21 & 22 MOPTA State Office Closed

28 Hanukkah Begins

How May We Help You?

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