2015–2016 National PTA
Official Back-to-School Kit
PTA Advocacy Quick Reference Guide
# Table of Contents

A Legacy in Leadership........................................................................................................................................3

Advocate With PTA ........................................................................................................................................3
   Making a Difference for All Children ........................................................................................................3
   Advocating for State Policy .........................................................................................................................4
   Ways to Speak Up ........................................................................................................................................4
   Engaging Your Community ..........................................................................................................................5
   Creating a Plan for Change ..........................................................................................................................6

Elections and Lobbying 101 ..........................................................................................................................8
   Lobbying and Legislative Activities ...........................................................................................................8
   Elections ......................................................................................................................................................9

Learning About the Legislative Process ......................................................................................................10
   How a Federal Bill Becomes a Law .............................................................................................................10

Interacting with Members of Congress .......................................................................................................11
   Corresponding with Members of Congress ...............................................................................................11
   Hosting Site Visits for Members of Congress ..........................................................................................16

Public Policy Agenda and Executive Summary ............................................................................................18

Common Core State Standards ....................................................................................................................19
A Legacy in Leadership

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPf1_ojajlc

Download and share this valuable tool highlighting PTA's history improving the education, health and wellness of children. This video can be played at PTA meetings, community events, or posted to your website or social media.

Advocate With PTA

Making a Difference for All Children

National PTA is the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association in the United States. But what is advocacy? For the purposes of PTA, advocacy is supporting and speaking up for children—in schools, in communities, and before government bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children.

Advocating for Federal Policy

Founded in 1897, PTA has a long, successful history of influencing federal policy to promote the education, health and well-being of all children—resulting in kindergarten classes, child labor laws, school lunch programs, a juvenile justice system and strengthened parent-teacher relationships.

PTA continues that legacy today by fighting for change under its federal public policy priorities:

• Family Engagement
• General Education
• Education Funding
• Early Education
• Special Education
• Child Health and Nutrition
• School Safety
• Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Advocating for State Policy

State laws have a major impact on education and children’s lives. Involving PTA members in state and local advocacy can play a pivotal role in securing adequate state laws, funding and policy for the education and well-being of our children.

Find Your State PTA’s website by viewing our list of state PTA presidents.

Ways to Speak Up

Child advocates work with policymakers at the federal, state and local levels to ensure sound policies that promote the interests of all children. Here are a few ways PTA members can influence policy:

• Work with your school to implement a strong family engagement policy, as required by federal law.
• Serve on the school board; attend school board meetings.
• Attend school district meetings on such topics as healthy alternatives in the lunchroom and federal, state and local budget cuts.
• Work with school leaders and state education officials to implement PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.
• Write a letter to the editor about the importance of family engagement in education.
• Become active with your state PTA’s efforts on state-level advocacy.
• Sign up for the PTA Takes Action Network and respond to action alerts to reach your legislators on important issues and legislation.
• Educate members of Congress and their staff on PTA’s federal public policy priorities.
• Meet with decision-makers at the local, state or federal level. “How to Lobby the PTA Way” is a useful demonstration of an effective meeting.
Engaging Your Community

For PTA’s policy priorities to become implemented around the country, PTAs must actively work to encourage both their membership and their community to participate. While it can sometimes seem like an uphill battle to get families and communities involved in activism, there are concrete steps that can be taken to get started.

The key to engaging existing and potential new members in PTA is to show people why their local PTA is relevant. If families can see that the PTA in their community is actively working to bring about positive change in their school district—change that can impact their child—they will be more inclined to get involved.

But how can PTAs highlight their continuing relevance? The first step is to recognize that PTAs are advocacy associations with a rich legacy of speaking up for every child. Services like hot lunches in schools and the establishment of juvenile courts would not be what they are today without PTA. It’s also important to take the fear out of advocacy. While the word “advocacy” can be scary for many people, it simply means to support a cause. To engage your local community and potentially gain membership, local PTA units should strive to highlight how they have supported every child and brought about change, especially in recent months or years. Your unit could keep newspaper clippings showcasing PTA success, create a collage of photos with local PTA members working for change or keep a bulletin board with past event notices. Be creative with it! Local PTA leaders should also familiarize themselves with the history of both their state PTA affiliate and National PTA so that communities can see why PTA matters at all levels.

• While educating the community on what PTA has done recently, PTA members should also be prepared to answer questions about what they are doing now to speak up for every child. To be able to effectively answer this question and peak interest in the activities of the local PTA, leaders should have an advocacy plan in place. What issues affecting child welfare are happening in your school district? What can your PTA do to address those issues? Remember, your unit does not have to tackle every issue all at once; rather, a better approach is to choose one or two topics that impact families, teachers and students the most and work to build support for PTA’s position. Using a strategy chart, units can set goals for what they would like to see happen. If community interest already exists for the issue, this is an excellent opportunity for local PTAs to raise their visibility by taking a stand and organizing their members for change, which may also result in new members joining. If the community is not aware of the issue, then PTA has the opportunity to educate them.
Creating a Plan for Change

As your PTA gears up for the school year, consider adding another new item to your list: advocacy. Take a moment in the next few weeks to consider what your local PTA unit’s advocacy goals are for the school year. What are some issues affecting students and families in your district that your PTA can “speak up” for? Perhaps you want healthier food in your students’ cafeteria, more family and community events, or safer routes to school that encourage walking and biking. Or, maybe your PTA wants to work with your state PTA to let your state and national leaders know your thoughts on school funding, to support National PTA’s public policy agenda on ESEA-NCLB reauthorization, or encourage members of Congress to support the Family Engagement in Education Act.

Once you have identified those issues most important to your PTA, you can begin organizing your PTA unit to effectively advocate for them. Here are some tips on how to do this:

Be realistic. Make sure the tasks you are undertaking are within the abilities of your PTA. Identify issues that are small enough in scope that the local PTA unit can address them in a reasonable manner, but will have a noticeable impact on families and students in your school or district. If you find that the topics are outside the scope of what is possible, re-think your goals to bring them into a more realistic sphere, while also finding ways to grow your unit’s capacity to make the larger objectives possible.

Have a plan: Using a strategy chart, create step-by-step events and objectives that can be completed one at a time. Trying to take on too much at once can be frustrating and cause you to lose sight of the end goal. Also be sure to celebrate the completion of these steps, no matter how large or small a victory it is!

Communicate your goals. PTA seeks to engage families in education. But oftentimes, families do not know how to get involved. Make sure you are communicating your initiatives through various mediums (social media, local newspaper, newsletters, etc.) so people in your school’s district know how they can get involved.

Work with local, state and national leaders. Reach out to the administration in your school district, your city council, state legislators and even members of Congress. Do some research on these individuals to find out what topics are important to them, so that you can approach the right people to support your cause. If you need help figuring out who your leaders are, you can go to PTA’s Takes Action site to search by your zip code and find out.

Be patient. Rome wasn’t built in a day, and neither can all solutions be arrived at instantaneously. Give yourself and your PTA volunteers enough time to get organized and complete the objectives in a workable timeframe.
National PTA has put together many resources for you to get started on organizing your local unit to meet its advocacy goals. You can check out our advocacy page for materials on various topics, including special education, education funding and the Common Core State Standards. The page also provides a link to National PTA’s public policy agenda, which may be helpful to your unit as you seek opportunities to promote the PTA cause. Our Advocacy Toolkit offers tips on how to interact with the media and your legislative leaders, in both web and PDF form. The toolkit also includes an outline of the federal budget process and short videos detailing the history of PTA as an advocacy organization and how to effectively make your voice heard with your leaders. You can also check out our advocacy training guide, which provides detailed steps on topics such as coalition building, recruiting volunteers, and building an effective advocacy campaign. Finally, you can always contact National PTA staff by phone or e-mail for help.

Your PTA unit can also help National PTA’s child advocacy efforts by signing up to receive action alerts from our Takes Action http://takesaction.pta.org/network. These alerts will keep you informed when Congress is acting on issues important to students and families, and will give you the opportunity to make your voice heard with your legislative leaders. For even more opportunities to receive information from National PTA, follow us on Twitter (@NationalPTA) and like us on Facebook http://www.facebook.com/ParentTeacherAssociation.

The new school year is a great time for your PTA to consider what opportunities exist in your school district for improving the lives of all children. As your students head back to school, take some time to figure out how you can advocate for every child with one voice.
Elections and Lobbying 101

Lobbying and Legislative Activities

National PTA and its constituent associations may support or oppose legislation and policies affecting children and youth to the extent allowed by their tax-exempt status. Historically, much of the legislation protecting the health, education and well-being of children and youth owes its existence to PTA support!

To stay within the permissible limits placed on it by its tax-exempt status, a PTA should focus the larger part of its legislative activities on educating and preparing members to exercise their individual and association rights. State, region, district, council and local PTAs can and should have legislative committees that share information with the membership. Every PTA should be part of the united effort working within the state and across the nation on behalf of children and youth.

National PTA and its constituent associations may—and are encouraged to—propose, support, or oppose legislation needed to achieve the purposes of the PTA and the legislative program—provided that those activities do not exceed the limitations established by the federal tax laws governing such organizations’ tax-exempt status. Keep accurate records of the amounts of time and money spent and the nature of volunteer activities. These records will help your PTA monitor its activities to stay within Internal Revenue Code (IRC) limitations, as well as complete any reports required by the IRS.

Educating

The following are legislative activities that do not count as lobbying because they are considered educational:

• Analyzing and reporting on passed, pending, or needed legislation (a) with members or (b) by invitation with government agencies
• Reporting state and national PTA positions to PTA members
• Adopting and reporting local PTA position statements about legislation or policies
• Researching an issue without bias toward one side or the other
Elections

Being educated about candidates for public office is critical to advocating effectively for youth. Through informed decision making at the ballot box, PTA members can directly make a difference on the issues that affect our children and public schools. And local PTA units have a role!

When PTA votes, we become a powerful voice for all children. There are many ways that PTA members can participate in the election process. PTAs can hold candidate forums, publish candidates’ responses to a questionnaire, help register new voters, and remind members to vote. Casting a ballot is the most important thing you can do in an election, as an advocate for children.

While there’s many activities PTAs can do around elections, here is what PTAs cannot do:

• Endorse candidates or a political party for public office.
• Invite only one candidate or political party in an election to speak to the PTA.
• Ask candidates to sign pledges on any issue (tacit endorsement).
• Tell PTA members to only vote for a candidate who supports “X” position.
• Distribute any campaign materials on behalf of a candidate.
• Wear campaign buttons or t-shirts during a PTA meeting.

Resources:
Your PTA can use these resources to help you successfully participate in election season as a 501(c)3:

• 501(c)(3) Permissible Activities Checklist (link to additional resource https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bxki49ygUB6NV1J3TVFERTJBdm8/edit?usp=sharing)
• Nonprofits and ballot measures (link to additional resource https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bxki49ygUB6NlbHPBREpXb1VIRkk/edit?usp=sharing)
• Candidate appearances at your nonprofit or event (link to additional resource https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bxki49ygUB6NXzI3V3lUjJb8bTQ/edit?usp=sharing)
• Hosting a candidate forum (link to additional resource https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bxki49ygUB6NSjAybzJBL_UxLVTa/edit?usp=sharing)
• Nonprofits, voting and elections (link to additional resource https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bxki49ygUB6Ndz285Z0tfTVc2eTQ/edit?usp=sharing)
Learning about the Legislative Process

How a Federal Bill Becomes a Law

Below you will find a flowchart outlining the basic process of how a bill becomes a law. For more detailed information, see this tip sheet from our Advocacy Toolkit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introducing the Bill</th>
<th>Any member of Congress can introduce legislation. Bills are assigned a number. H.R. bills originated in the House of Representatives, S. bills in the Senate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee Referral</td>
<td>After a bill has been introduced and assigned a number, it is referred to the committee, which has the jurisdiction over the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Action</td>
<td>Committee chairman will decide whether or not to hold a hearing or a “mark-up” on the bill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor Debates and Votes</td>
<td>Speaker of the House or Senate Majority Leader determines if and when a bill will come to the floor for voting by the full body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral to the Other Chamber</td>
<td>After a bill has been passed by one chamber of Congress, it is referred to the other chamber, which may consider the bill as it was received, reject it, or amend it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference on a Bill</td>
<td>If the House and Senate versions of a bill vary after passing both chambers, a conference committee is created to reconcile the two versions. If no agreement is reached, the bill dies. If a consensus is reached, it must be passed by both chambers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action by the Presidents</td>
<td>After the final version of the bill passes in both chambers of Congress, it is sent to the President to be signed into law. President may choose to sign or veto the bill. Congress can override a veto with a two-thirds majority vote.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interacting with Members of Congress

Corresponding With Members of Congress

Interaction between any elected official and his or her constituents is a crucial part of the democratic process. This is especially true for members of an advocacy organization such as the National PTA. PTA wants senators and representatives to view PTA’s members as a useful and knowledgeable resource when it comes to matters that concern the well-being of children. Building this relationship is done in a variety of ways, not the least of which is a regular correspondence between you and your member of Congress. Hearing the needs and concerns of their constituents is of the utmost importance to elected officials, as constituents are the ones who decide whether or not they remain in office.

When you decide to advocate on behalf of children, it is important to consider your audience. While it may be tempting to send out a mass e-mail or letter to all or many members of Congress, only the members who represent your district will respond to what you have to say. The PTA Takes Action Network http://takesaction.pta.org/ can provide you with contact information for your members of Congress, should you need assistance.

Things to Remember when Corresponding with Your Members of Congress

- Always be polite and courteous. Members of Congress and their legislative staff are considerably less likely to respond to rude or profane letters.
- Be as concise as possible. Remember that each congressional office has dozens of legislative issues to cover and hundreds of constituent requests each day.
- Include your home or work address in every letter, even in e-mails.
- Thank the member of Congress for taking the time to read your letter.
- Remember that correspondence with any elected official is about building an ongoing relationship and persuading them to think of you as a resource. Even if an elected official does not agree with your point of view on an issue today, they might in the future.
Emailing is Faster than Postal Mail

E-mails are the most effective form of communication when advocating a Congressional office. Most Congressional offices now have standard e-mail forms that can be accessed right from the “Contact” tab of their website. Due to the heightened security measures on Capitol Hill, a letter sent through the postal service can take between two and four weeks to reach a Congressional office. However, if you email that same letter, the office will receive it immediately. This is especially important when what you are advocating for is time sensitive. The best example of this is when you are asking the member of Congress to vote a certain way on an upcoming bill. If you mail the letter, they would likely receive it long after the voting has passed.

E-Mail Tips:

• Keep your letter as short and concise as possible. Some e-mails can be as short as a single paragraph urging your member of Congress to vote a certain way or to advocate for a certain issue, but letters up to three paragraphs are effective.

• Make sure the important information contained in your e-mail jumps out. You can do this by putting what action you are requesting in the subject line (ex: YES on H.R. 3). Even if the member or his/her staff does not take the time to read your letter in its entirety, they will still have received the message that one of their constituents feels a certain way about an issue.

• By using PTA Takes Action Network you can email your members of Congress directly, using a PTA action alert on current legislative issues affecting the education, health and well-being of our children.

Drafting Your Letter

After you have used the PTA Takes Action Network to find out who your Congressional representatives are, it’s time to begin drafting your letter. It is generally not the members themselves that read constituent mail, but their legislative aides. These legislative aides receive hundreds of e-mails, phone calls and letters every day regarding a wide array of policies, so it is important that your letter be as concise as possible in order to be effective. It is also helpful to use your own words and draft a unique letter for your correspondence with your elected official.
Tips for Drafting an Effective Letter:

- Make sure to include the specific bill number (ex: H.R. 1 or S. 1).
- A one-page, three-paragraph letter is usually recommended.
- In your first paragraph, explain why you are writing and identify yourself and indicate your connection to PTA.
- In your second paragraph, provide more detail on the issue about which you are writing.
  » Briefly include relevant research, local data, and relevant personal stories that will effectively persuade your member of Congress to see your side of the issue.
- Finally, state what action you would like your member of Congress to take in the third paragraph. If you are requesting they vote Yes or No on an upcoming vote on a bill, then be direct and say so. Or, politely request that they direct their attention to matters relevant to PTA.

A sample letter has been included below.

Calling Your Member of Congress

Calling your member of Congress is an effective way to advocate, especially when an important vote is coming up. As with other forms of communication between yourself and an elected official, members of Congress will only correspond with their own constituents out of professional courtesy to other members.

Tips for Calling Your Member of Congress:

- Make sure to prepare beforehand for your call. If there is a certain piece of legislation you would like the member of Congress to vote on, know what the specific number is (ex: H.R. 2).
- Identify yourself as one of the member’s constituents.
- Explain to the staff member what it is you are calling about and what action you would like the member to take (ex: voting Yes or No on a piece of legislation).
  » Feel free to briefly share any relevant research, data and stories that you might have with the staff member. This will go a long way in your relationship building with your congressional office. You want them to think of you as a resource when it comes to education issues.
  » Try to illustrate the connection between the legislation being voted on in Washington with the effects it will have in your community. This will help bring the point home to the member and provide further encouragement for their office to take your requests and concerns seriously.
- Because congressional offices are extremely busy, it is important to be as concise and brief as possible in order to be effective. While you might feel that explaining the minutiae of a bill to the staff member will be helpful, this will only frustrate whomever you are talking to and will likely not help your cause.
• Be as congenial and polite as possible. Staff members are overwhelmed with angry phone calls, letters and faxes on a daily basis. Being pleasant and easy to talk to will go a long way in getting your voice heard.

• Be aware and respectful of the fact that the staff member may not have in-depth knowledge about the issue or specific legislation you are calling to discuss. There are thousands of bills introduced each Congress, so be mindful of this fact and do not be discouraged if they are not familiar with the issue or legislation.

• Always thank the staff member for taking the time to talk with you.

A sample phone conversation has been included below.

Afterwards

Keep National PTA Informed

Let National PTA know how your phone conversation went or what response you received from your e-mail. Be sure to include information on where your member of Congress stood on the issues you discussed. You can access an Advocacy Activity Form at http://stateadvocacyfeedback.questionpro.com. This gives PTA staff in Washington, D.C. additional insight into the positions of members of Congress and helps us identify strong supporters and those that need additional attention or information, as well as PTA members who have good relationships that can be called upon in the future.
Sample Letter

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (insert name):

As a member of the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), (your state) PTA and your constituent, I would like to encourage you to support and co-sponsor the Family Engagement in Education Act of 2013. The Family Engagement in Education Act provides resources for schools and districts on best practices in engaging parents to raise student achievement, supports teachers and principals by providing professional development for educators on how to partner with parents to close the achievement gap, and builds statewide and local capacity to engage parents. [Insert information about how the Family Engagement in Education Act would serve families within your community].

Research demonstrates that when parents are engaged in their children's education, student achievement and graduation rates increase. When families are engaged, students are more likely to score higher on tests, earn higher grades, attend school regularly, have better social skills, demonstrate improved behavior, adapt well to school, graduate from high school on time, and pursue postsecondary education, regardless of their income level. Furthermore, recent research on school reform has demonstrated that meaningful family engagement is an essential component of successful and sustainable school turnaround reforms, as important as school leadership and curriculum alignment.

Additionally, studies show that engaging families is cost effective; schools would have to spend more than $1,000 dollars per pupil to get the same results. The Family Engagement in Education Act is also cost effective; it puts forth a framework for systemic, integrated, and sustainable family engagement at all levels and allows flexibility and provides resources for local innovation and strategic partnership, without authorizing any new spending.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my concerns and again I encourage you to increase funding for these important family engagement programs.

Sincerely:

(Insert name and address)
Sample Phone Conversation

Staff Member: Thank you for calling Congresswoman Smith’s office, how may I help you?

Caller: Hello, My name is (your name) from (City and State) and I am calling on behalf of the National PTA/state PTA/local unit PTA.

Staff Member: Wonderful, what can I do for you?

Caller: As a concerned member of the Congresswoman’s district, I support H.R. 2, which is being voted on this week, and I urge the Congresswoman to vote yes on this bill. (Insert information on why you support, in addition to why it is of concern to the member of Congress’s constituents. But remember, be brief!)

Staff Member: Congressman Smith does not support H.R. 2, but thank you for sharing your concerns with us, and I will relay your comments on to the member of Congress.

Caller: Thank you for this information. I appreciate you sharing my thoughts, as I hope the Congresswoman may reconsider her position. Have a great day.

Hosting Site Visits for Members of Congress

Hosting site visits for members of Congress are an excellent way to not only continue to build your relationship between yourself and your elected officials, but also to establish your PTA as a resource. Site visits allow elected officials the opportunity to see that PTA is not about bake sales, but about school and family engagement and school improvement. Your elected officials can see firsthand the things your local PTA is doing for the school in his or her district. Before you begin the process, feel free to reach out to National PTA Government Affairs staff to help brainstorm and plan your visit.

Planning the Visit

Before you begin coordinating a school visit, check with the principal for the policies on site visits. Meet with school officials to brainstorm what you would like to accomplish and what messages you would like to deliver, such as highlighting successful family engagement programs within your school and advocating for certain legislation. In order to ensure the visit runs smoothly, create a draft agenda for the visit—including which classrooms, programs and personnel you’d like your member of Congress to see in action.

Scheduling the Visit

Arrange a site visit when your member of Congress is home in his or her district and when school is in session. Members of Congress are usually in their home districts Friday through Monday and during the August recess. For additional recess opportunities, please check the following calendars:
Senate: [http://www.senate.gov/legislative/2015_schedule.htm](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/2015_schedule.htm)

House: [http://www.majorityleader.gov/Calendar/114thCongressFirstSession.pdf](http://www.majorityleader.gov/Calendar/114thCongressFirstSession.pdf)

**Tips for Scheduling a Visit:**

- E-mail a letter of request to your member of Congress’s district scheduler at least six weeks in advance of the proposed site visit (PTA Take Action Center, at www.PTA.org/takeaction can provide you with their contact information).
- Explain why you believe the member of Congress’s visit would be beneficial (i.e., to see effective family engagement programs).
- Include specific information about the visit, such as date, time, location, others who may be invited (i.e., business partners), whether the media will be present, and what activities are planned for the visit.
- Members of Congress’s schedules can be hectic, so be as flexible as possible with your schedule to accommodate the member.
- Make sure to coordinate dates with the school and the member’s district staff to work out any possible scheduling conflicts, such as school wide testing.

**Alerting the Media**

Work with the member of Congress’s press secretary or communications director and school staff to coordinate press activity. Invite local television news stations and newspapers to cover the event. Send a media advisory to all the local news outlets alerting them to the time, date and purpose of the site visit. If the media is unable to be present, take pictures and include them with a summary of the activities and send this to the local media outlets.

**Hosting the Visit**

Prepare teachers and students before the visit by explaining what to expect as well as appropriate behaviors during the visit. Teachers can plan lessons and activities to help students understand the role of our legislators, civic responsibilities and the purpose of the visit. Have students interact with the member of Congress and provide that member with literature on local statistics regarding the effectiveness of your programs and family engagement, anecdotes of success stories, and other information that shows the connection between PTA, your community and the member’s constituents. Make your requests for legislation needed to strengthen your school or family engagement policies.
After the Visit

Send a media release to local news outlets. Send a thank-you letter, including any photos and press stories. Be sure parents sign a release form before pictures or names of students go out in the media, at http://www.ptakit.org/Communications/Photography-and-Videography/Release-Forms.aspx. In the letter, recap the highlights of their visit and restate any requests for legislation needed to strengthen your school and family engagement policies.

Keep National PTA Informed

Let National PTA know how your visit went and where your member of Congress stood on any issues you may have discussed. You can access an Advocacy Activity Form at http://stateadvocacyfeedback.questionpro.com. This gives PTA staff in Washington additional insight into the positions of members of Congress and helps us identify strong supporters and those that need additional attention or information, as well as PTA members who have good relationships that can be called upon in the future.

Public Policy Agenda and Executive Summary

National PTA has a rich history and tradition of advocating for our children. Each year, National PTA publishes a public policy agenda that outlines policy priorities and recommendations for Congress and the Administration.

The priorities are selected based on the following criteria:

- Timeliness of issue (Is it being considered before Congress and the Administration?)
- Opportunities for National PTA to provide leadership and expertise to Congress
- Alignment to National PTA’s mission
- Ability to achieve meaningful policy change that will produce positive results for children and their families

2015 Public Policy Agenda:

The 2015 Public Policy Agenda features seven key policy areas:

- Elementary and Secondary Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Special Education
Common Core State Standards

National Parent Teacher Association is uniquely positioned to be an influential and credible voice in advancing the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). As states begin full implementation and align new assessments and curriculum, it is imperative that PTA leaders work with local and state decision makers to ensure a smooth transition.

The CCSSI is a joint effort led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop a common core of K-12 standards in English language, arts and mathematics. The aim of this state-led initiative is to develop internationally-benchmarked standards that ensure all students are held to consistent expectations that will prepare them for college and career. To date, 43 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have adopted the standards.

National PTA has created a toolkit [http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content2.cfm?ItemNumber=3008&navItemNumber=557](http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content2.cfm?ItemNumber=3008&navItemNumber=557) to assist you in communicating our position on Common Core Standards and to aid you in supporting your schools through implementation. PTA has also released the Parents Guide to Student Success [http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583](http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583) which outlines CCSSI changes grade by grade, and the new Assessment and Accountability Guides [http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3816](http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3816) which give parents state-by-state, in-depth information about their new assessments. Another new resource for parents is the CCSSI Webinar Series [http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3894](http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3894). The topics include: CCSSI Overview, Mythbusters, Best Practices and a Resource Review.