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School of Excellence: Leading the Way

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By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

- Identify PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships
- Understand how to engage families through the School of Excellence Program
- Enroll in National PTA's School of Excellence

National PTA's Definition of Effective Family Engagement

National PTA worked with the leading researchers to develop a formal definition of effective family engagement.

There are three components.



National PTA's Definition of Effective Family Engagement

A Shared Responsibility in which:

- Schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to engaging families in meaningful and culturally respectful ways, and
- Families are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development.



National PTA's Definition of Effective Family Engagement

Cradle to Career:

- Continuous across a child's life, spanning from Early Head Start programs to college and career.



National PTA's Definition of Effective Family Engagement

Across Contexts:

- Carried out everywhere that children learn –
 - Home
 - Pre-kindergarten programs
 - School
 - After-school programs
 - Faith-based organizations
 - Community programs and activities



Students with Involved Families

No matter what their family income or background may be, students with involved parents/caregivers are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Pass their classes
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education



Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Family Engagement Supports School Reform

New research shows that meaningful family and community engagement is one of **five essential ingredients for effective school reform:**

1. (Principal) leadership as the driver for change
2. Family-school-community ties
3. Professional capacity
4. Student-centered learning climate
5. Instructional guidance

Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

National Standards for Family-School Partnerships



Standard 1:

Welcoming All Families

Goal 1: Create a Welcoming Climate

- Create a family-friendly atmosphere
- Develop personal relationships
- Offer different types of volunteer opportunities
- Always say “Yes” when a parent offers to help

Goal 2: Build a Respectful, Inclusive School Community

- Respect all families
- Remove economic or other obstacles to participation
- Ensure accessible programming

Standard 1: Welcoming All Families

Getting Started

PTA Leaders

- Establish a PTA welcoming committee
- Greet other parents at school events
- Sit with someone you don't know and find out how they want to contribute
- Recruit bilingual parents or use translation headsets
- Offer family activities at low or no cost
- Consider child care and transportation solutions
- Host events in varying community locations or formats

School Leaders

- Work with PTA to develop customer service guidelines for all staff
- Set up a parent help desk or welcome center
- Conduct meet-and-greet walks in the neighborhoods where students live
- Use a professional development day to address assumptions about race, class, and culture
- Explore family resource center options
- Be accessible and available
- Show families their presence is valued

Standard 2: Communicating Effectively

Goal: Share information between school and families

- Use multiple communication paths
- Survey families to identify issues and concerns
- Have access to the principal
- Provide information on current issues
- Facilitate connections among families



Standard 2:

Communicating Effectively

Getting Started

- Use all communication channels: cable television, newspapers, radio, automated phone systems, text messaging, school and PTA web sites, social media, etc.
- Identify parents, community members, organizations and businesses that can help facilitate home-school communication
- Communicate in languages and formats that will best inform all families
- Sponsor events that encourage interaction between educators and families in a fun, social way

Standard 3: Supporting Student Success

Goal 1: Share information about student progress

- Ensure family-teacher communication
- Link student work to academic standards
- Use standardized test results to increase achievement
- Share school progress

Goal 2: Support learning by engaging families

- Engage families in classroom learning
- Develop family ability to strengthen learning at home
- Promote after-school learning

Standard 3: Supporting Student Success

Getting Started

- Link all events to student learning, including activities focused on making all families feel welcome. For example:
 - ✓ Work with school leadership to conduct workshops on interpreting standardized test data
 - ✓ Collaborate with teachers to provide fun, family-centered events focused on topics such as literacy, study skills, individual curriculum areas, and college and career planning

Standard 4:

Speaking Up for Every Child

Goal 1: Inform families about how the school system works

- Describe how the school and district operate
- Share rights and responsibilities under federal and state laws
- Ensure access to student support services
- Resolve problems and conflicts

Goal 2: Empower families to support overall student success in school

- Develop families' capacity to be effective advocates
- Engage families in planning for the future
- Facilitate smooth transitions
- Encourage families to participate in civic advocacy for student achievement

Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child

Getting Started: A PTA and School Collaboration

- Host information sessions about special programs; reach out to under-represented populations to ensure access and equity for all students.
- Involve families in ongoing training on topics such as being an effective advocate for your child, identifying and supporting learning styles, resolving difficulties, and fostering student achievement.
- Share the school's policy and procedures for resolving concerns frequently.
- Promote any successful changes fueled by family engagement.
- Facilitate family participation in school committees and other community groups.

Standard 5: Sharing Power

Goal 1: Strengthen the family's voice in shared decision-making

- Ensure families have a voice in all decisions that affect children
- Address equity issues
- Develop parent leaders

Goal 2: Building families' social and political connections

- Connect families to local officials
- Develop an effective PTA that represents all families

Standard 5: Sharing Power

Getting Started

- Identify ways the PTA can support the school improvement plan
- Provide opportunities to interact with your elected officials
- Conduct an annual family survey or focus groups to get on current and potential school programs and policies
- Grow a diverse PTA in membership and leadership
- Sponsor a school accountability meeting to inform families about school programs, services, and performance data
- Invite parents to share concerns and ideas through a suggestion box in the front office

Standard 6:

Collaborating with Community

Goal: Connecting the school with community resources

- Serve as the link to community resources and services
- Organize support from community partners
- Turn the school into a hub of community life
- Partner with community groups to strengthen families and support student success

Standard 6: Collaborating with Community

Getting Started

- Identify your goals and determine opportunities for community collaboration that will help you to achieve your desired results for family engagement and student learning
- Leverage individual community connections and encourage connected individuals to take the lead on forging and sustaining the collaboration on behalf of the PTA/school
- Bring partners together around a shared vision
- Recognize partners and thank them whenever you can

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**FAMILY-SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIPS**

Education

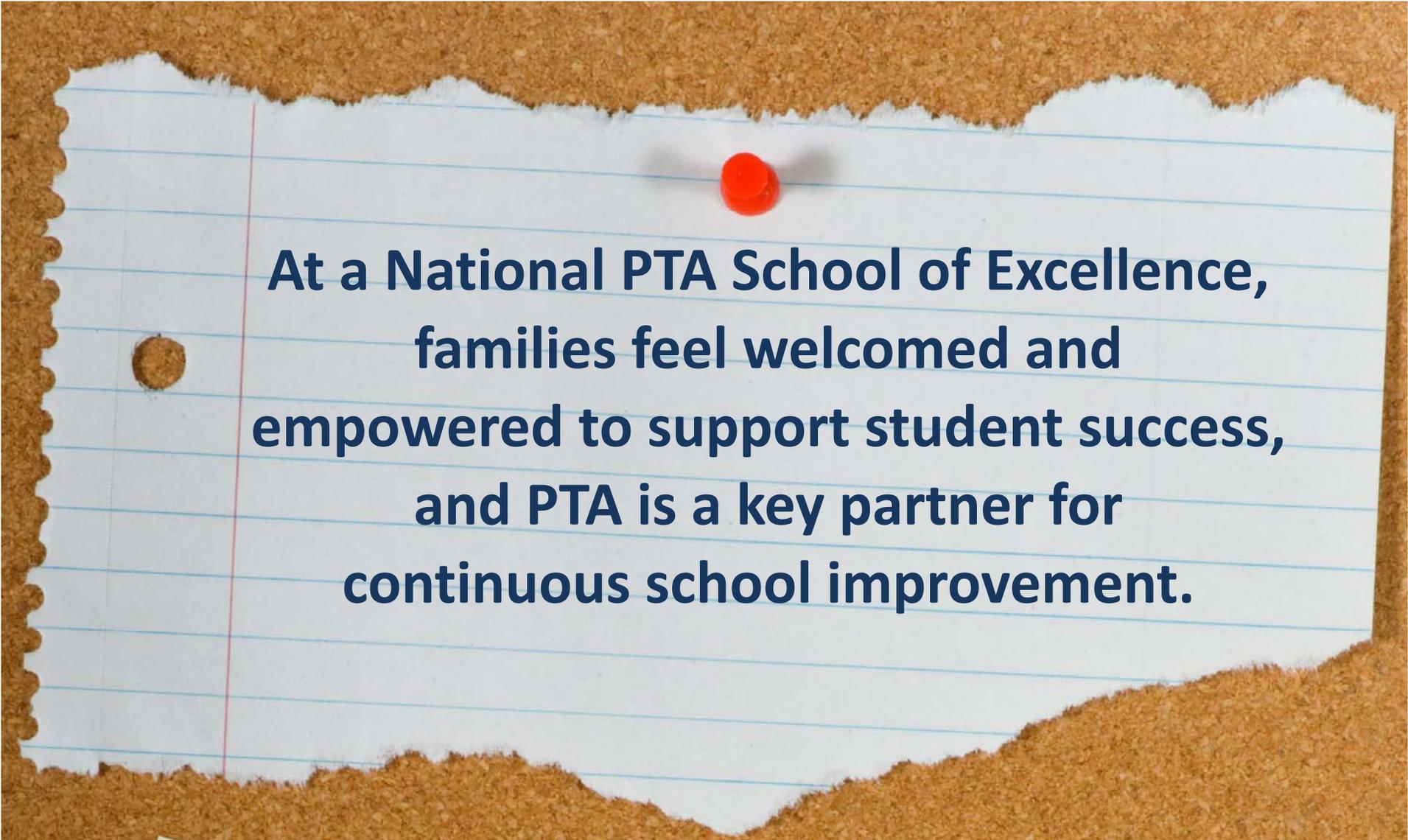


To enrich the
educational experience
& overall well-being
of every child

**Arts in
Education**

**Health &
Safety**

**COMMUNITY
RESOURCES**



**At a National PTA School of Excellence,
families feel welcomed and
empowered to support student success,
and PTA is a key partner for
continuous school improvement.**

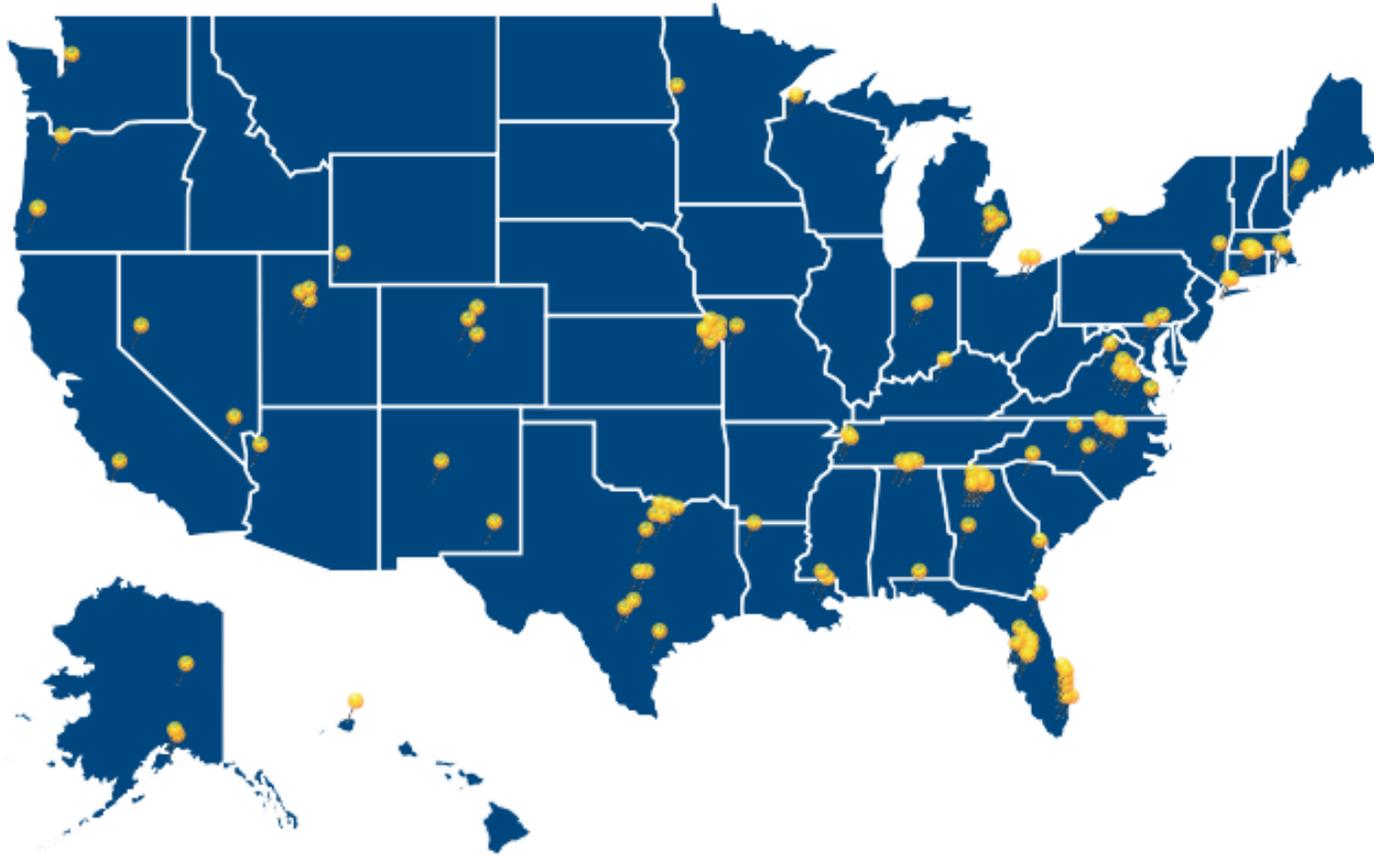
Why participate

- Make your school a *more welcoming place for families*.
- Empower families to *be part of school decision-making*.
- Demonstrate to school leaders that **PTA is a key partner** for continuous school improvements.
- Receive *recognition in your community, state and nationwide* for engaging families in a way that makes a substantial, positive impact on your school and student success.

School of Excellence Award Recipients

(124 Recipients in 33 States)

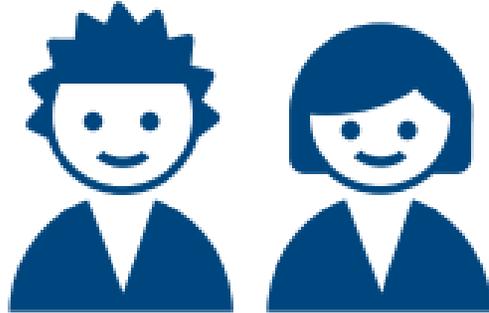
Not pictured: Incirlik Unit School PTSA in Turkey



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About the 2015-2017 National PTA Schools of Excellence



Served
93,530
students



36%
are Title 1 Schools



Two-thirds have greater than
30% of student
population that qualify for
free/reduced lunch

Welcoming All Families



Nearly **95% of families** feel they are treated fairly regardless of age, gender, race or cultural background.

Communicating Effectively



95% of families believe their school and PTA communicate with families in multiple ways.

Supporting Student Success



79% of families feel they understand the academic standards their child is expected to meet and how the curriculum is linked to those standards.

Speaking Up for Every Child



83% of families feel PTA promotes opportunities to empower parents to advocate for the success of their own child and other children in their school.

Sharing Power



Approximately **81% of families** believe their school establishes policies that recognize and respect families' cultural, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic diversity.

Collaborating with the Community



93% of families feel the school is a central part of their community.

key outcomes that demonstrate the **strength** of family-school partnerships after completion of the National PTA School of Excellence program

“Just this year alone, we have the most PTA members ever at just under 1,000 and 100% faculty. We tripled our volunteer base from 97 to 343.

- Judy Steinmetz, Great Bridge Middle PTA, Chesapeake, VA

“We began the process of becoming a PTA School of Excellence in hopes we will receive the award. What transpired has been its own award – a dedicated group of parents and teachers working together to achieve a common goal.

- Maria Rich, Jonas Salk Middle School, Old Bridge, NJ

“We are using our collective voice to speak up for every child to ensure that students have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.”

-Tiffany Kwas, Eden Central, Buffalo, NY

“We look forward to receiving the next Roadmap to Excellence and hope to continue to use the tools and resources that are part of the National Standards to assess, improve and implement Mesa Alta Jr. High School policies, practices, and programs.”

-Rylee Kiddoo, Bloomfield PTA, Bloomfield, NM

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Step 1: Enroll!

Apr. 1 - Oct. 1, 2016

PTA.org/Excellence

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Step 2: Review the *Getting Started Guide*



National PTA School of Excellence
Getting Started Guide

Step #3:

Conduct a Family-School Partnership Scan by November 1, 2016

- Meet with school principal and complete the School Leader Questionnaire
- Gather family feedback using the Family Survey tool
- Set shared goal(s)
- Share results and goal(s) using online Family-School Partnership form on PTA.org/Excellence



SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Family Survey

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The National PTA School of Excellence program is designed to support our school and PTA as we strengthen family-school partnerships that enrich students’ educational experiences and overall well-being. One step in the process is to gather feedback from our school family on the frequency of family engagement strategies implemented by our school. We will need your help in completing this survey at the beginning of the year and end of the year to be considered for the National PTA School of Excellence designation.

DIRECTIONS: Mark an “X” in the box that most accurately expresses how you feel about your experience. Return this survey to **{Insert Drop-off Method}**.

	Unknown	Never	Sometime	Frequently	Always
1. My school has friendly signs inside and outside to welcome families and visitors in the multiple languages we speak.					
2. My school and PTA translates communications into the school’s major languages.					
3. I feel encouraged to volunteer.					
4. I feel my school’s policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of our school community.					
5. I feel treated fairly regardless of age, gender, race, or cultural background.					
6. My school communicates with me in multiple ways (e.g., email, phone, web site).					

Family-School Partnership Scan

1. Analyze existing family engagement measures deployed by your school/PTA.

	Unknown	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Welcoming All Families					
1. Our school has friendly signs inside and outside to welcome families and visitors in the multiple languages they speak.					
2. Our school and PTA translate communications into the school's major languages.					
3. Families feel encouraged to volunteer.					
4. Families feel our school's policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity in our school community.					
5. Families feel they are treated fairly regardless of age, gender, race, or cultural background.					
Communicating Effectively					
1. Our school and PTA communicate with families in multiple ways (e.g., email, phone, web site).					

Step #4: Use the Roadmap to Excellence



Roadmap to Excellence

STEPS TO A STRONGER FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

The primary objective of the National PTA School of Excellence program is to help PTAs and schools strengthen family-school partnerships to benefit all students' academic success and general well-being. Your progress toward this objective is what will be assessed through the final National PTA School of Excellence Application, submitted at the end of the school year.

National PTA offers the following customized recommendations to help your school move its family-school partnership to the next level. Each recommendation is based on your answers to the Family-School Partnership Scan.

Your next step is to review these recommendations with your school leaders and School of Excellence team and determine what you can work on first. Try to make progress by focusing on two to three recommendations per National Standard for Family-School Partnerships. Your focused attention to making substantial progress in a few areas per National Standard will help you to achieve the National PTA School.

If you have questions about these recommendations, email excellence@pta.org or call us at 800-307-4PTA. Your success is ours. We want to help.

Welcoming All Families	National PTA's Recommendations
1. Our school has friendly signs inside and outside to welcome families and visitors in the multiple languages they speak.	You said, "Sometimes." Good start—but there is room for improvement! Families feel more welcome when they see friendly signs in multiple languages throughout the building. Use school demographic data to determine the three languages most commonly spoken by families in your school community. Work with the school and your membership committee to update signs throughout the building in these languages. Start with the signs families see first upon entering the building, such as welcome signs on the front door and front office entrances.
2. Our school and PTA translate communications into the school's major languages.	You said, "Never." This is an opportunity for improvement! You want families from diverse backgrounds engaged in all school activities. In order to achieve this, it is important to keep all families informed about issues and events occurring at the school. If your school is not translating this information into families' native languages, you may be missing a great opportunity for effective communication between school and home. Take the first step: Work with your parent liaison, school secretary or parent advisory committee to review current communication practices at your school. You may need to advocate for a more deliberate



Roadmap to Excellence

3. Families feel encouraged to volunteer.	You said, "Frequently." Great job! Take it to the next level: Using the volunteer or membership forms that families complete each year, work with your membership, volunteer or hospitality committee to make personal phone calls to diverse parents to solicit their ideas about volunteering. Help connect parents to specific opportunities that interest them. This personal touch will help broaden your volunteer base and engage even more families in serving their school community.
4. Families feel our school's policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity in our school community.	You said, "Always." Excellent—keep it up!
5. Families feel they are treated fairly regardless of age, gender, race, or cultural background.	You said, "Sometimes." Good start—but there is room for improvement! Two-way communication occurs when teachers and families dialogue together, and it is a shared responsibility. The traditional parent-teacher conference is one strategy for building effective two-way communication. Provide families with information about what to do to make parent-teacher conferences more effective. They should be prepared to discuss specific concerns or provide new information about their child. Discussion should avoid blame by taking a solution-focused approach. National PTA offers additional tips for what to do before, during and after a parent-teacher conference: http://www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?itemNumber=1710
6. Families feel our school is inviting and is a place where families feel they belong.	You said, "Frequently." Great job! Take it to the next level: Families and school staff should collaborate continuously to support students' learning at home and at school. Teachers and parents can discuss students' individual learning styles, family cultural experiences, strengths, and academic and personal needs regularly and develop personalized goals to support academic success. Consider implementing one of the following strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At many schools, parents, students and teachers work together to establish personal education plans (PEPs) to support students' education or career goals. At Title I schools, every family signs a home-school compact. These compacts should be discussed at parent-teacher conferences and can be individualized if a student is not meeting standards. This video from Great Schools describes a four-step process for helping children set and reach goals: http://www.greatschools.org/parenting/motivation-confidence/4213-help-your-child-make-and-reach-goals-video.es

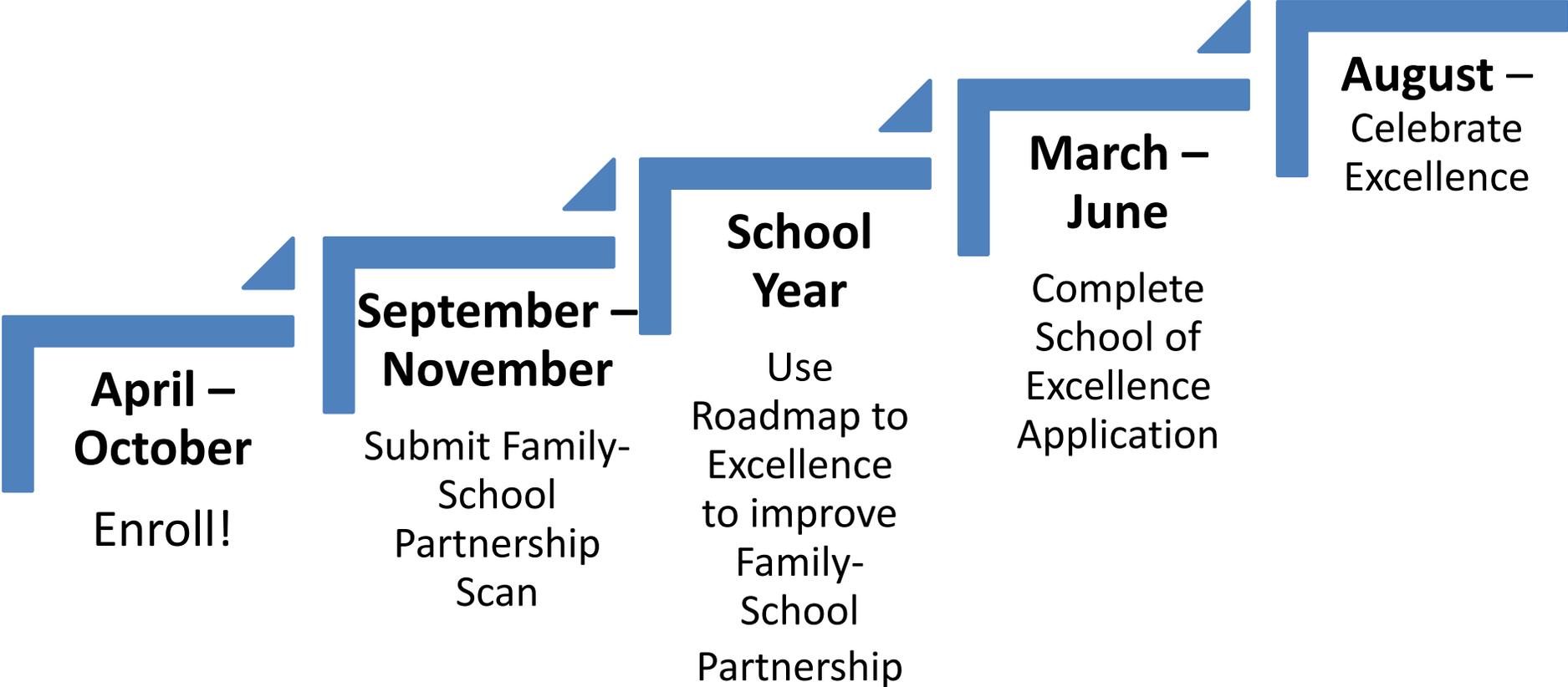
Step #4:
**Complete the National PTA School of Excellence
Application by June 1, 2017**



Step #5: Celebrate your excellence!

- Notification and celebration kit sent by mid-August
 - *Celebrate Your Excellence Guide*
 - Banner
 - Media outreach tools
 - Graphics for school and PTA stationery
 - Event suggestions
 - National PTA recognition
 - State PTA recognition
- Qualify to win a Phoebe Apperson Hearst Award and a \$2,000 grant

Program Timeline



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School of Excellence Celebration Video

National PTA President Laura Bay





Questions?

Excellence@pta.org

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