

**DIVERSITY,
INCLUSION &
OUTREACH**

2019 – 2020

Section 10

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN PTA

National PTA Diversity and Inclusion Policy:

The National Congress of Mothers, irrespective of creed, color or condition, stands for all parenthood, childhood, homehood. ~ Alice McLellan Birney, 1898, Cofounder of National PTA

Those words, true in 1898, are even truer today. PTAs everywhere must understand and embrace the uniqueness of all individuals, appreciating that each contributes a diversity of views, experiences, cultural heritage/traditions, skills/abilities, values and preferences.

When PTAs respect differences yet acknowledge shared commonalities uniting their communities, then develop meaningful priorities based upon their knowledge, they genuinely represent their communities. When PTAs represent their communities, they gain strength and effectiveness through increased volunteer and resource support.

The recognition of diversity within organizations is valuing differences and similarities in people through actions and accountability.

These differences and similarities include age, ethnicity, language and culture, economic status, educational background, gender, geographic location, marital status, mental ability, national origin, organizational position and tenure, parental status, physical ability, political philosophy, race, religion, sexual orientation, and work experience.

Therefore, PTAs at every level must:

- Openly assess beliefs and practices to assure inclusiveness and guard against discrimination;
- Make every effort to create a PTA board and membership that is inclusive and reflective of its community;
- Encourage that all PTA activities be planned by a committee which is representative of the population;
- Foster programs and practices that eliminate bias, prejudice and misunderstanding within their communities;
- Become acquainted with the leaders of the many diverse groups in the community and collaborate with them to increase parent, family and community involvement;
- Educate its leaders and members to the needs, cultural beliefs, traditions and family structures of the population they serve; and
- Propose change wherever discriminatory practices are perceived.

PTA values and appreciates diversity, which enriches and strengthens the structure of our society within our state and nation.

Today's PTA recognizes that diversity and inclusion are about more than gender and race/ethnicity. While those remain key, we now define diversity to include the many differences that distinguish people, including mental, emotional, psychological and physical disabilities; learning styles; geographic residence; languages used; cultural heritage; educational level and more.

The role of PTA leaders at every level—local, state and national—is to engage all families and communities as we build our membership. Local diversity leaders are supported by Diversity Chairs (or other designated diversity leaders) at the state level, and by the National Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach Committee.

Although a Diversity Chair is critical to guide diversity and inclusion efforts, forming a committee for Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach can be even more effective than vesting all responsibility in just one person. Such a committee can include members addressing the particular communities that populate your PTA area.

Why is it important to have specific leadership roles to address

Diversity and Inclusion initiatives? It is important to have formal roles such as a Diversity Chair to provide leadership, support and encouragement for local, council and district diversity and inclusion initiatives. Having a point of contact to provide guidance and assistance allows for cohesion and consistency of diversity initiatives. Some state and regional groups have decided to assign leadership roles for more specific diversity initiatives, such as a Male Engagement Chair or Special Needs Chair. These leaders can help PTA groups keep up with legislation, requirements and opportunities affecting specific communities, as well as maintain outreach and assistance efforts.

Assemble a Diverse Committee

To better understand the children and families that you are serving, assemble a diversity committee that fully represents your community. Who are the leaders and key influencers in your community? What are the key diversity groups that should be represented in your initiative? Having a well-balanced team of diverse members can assist you in identifying the most pressing concerns and help you gain “buy-in” from others in the community to support and contribute to your diversity and inclusion initiatives.



Set Goals, Milestones and Realistic Expectations

To keep your diversity initiatives on track and to measure the effectiveness of your efforts, the diversity committee needs to establish goals. Goals are crucial to the success of your initiatives, enabling you to:

- Hold leaders and members accountable
- Establish a budget
- Plan for staffing
- Set timelines for completion

Setting milestones for your goals will allow you to pace and streamline your diversity efforts for efficiency and success. To stay on track, you will need to reassess your milestones monthly or quarterly and make adjustments accordingly.

Setting realistic expectations among the diversity committee members and the groups that you represent is important. New committees often start very passionately with big goals and many objectives in mind. However, if they do not have the required resources or approval to achieve those goals and objectives, it can become disappointing to both leaders and members. Consistently failing to meet expectations also can create a negative perception of the initiative among the groups being served.

To avoid this pitfall, establish realistic goals that can be accomplished with the resources that you have and within the timeframe allocated. Communicate regularly with your membership across various channels to minimize misconceptions and keep everyone informed.

Try New Ideas

Having a diversity committee allows your PTA to explore and learn through new experiences. Some of the best ideas come from hearing many different perspectives during the brainstorming and planning phases of an initiative. As you plan your events and activities for the year, make sure that you get input from as many viewpoints as possible. Solicit ideas from team members who may be more quiet or reserved; their contributions are just as valuable. Don't be afraid to try something new or step outside of the box. Some ideas may work well, and some may not. Either way, your committee will learn and grow from the experience.

HOW DIVERSE IS YOUR PTA BOARD?

The National PTA has a Diversity & Inclusion Tool Kit available for members on its website at www.pta.org/diversity. Here you can find Leadership Tips and Tools, and references for supporting multicultural membership growth.

Personal Action Plan

I _____ (name),

_____ (PTA title or affiliation status with PTA),

will support the Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach efforts of my (state, council, region, unit) by utilizing the Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit. My PTA and community will benefit in the following ways (list benefits):

Resolution on High Expectations for Students with Disabilities

National PTA Adopted the Resolution on High Expectations for Students with Disabilities at the 2018 National PTA Convention at New Orleans, LA.

Whereas, More than half of all students with disabilities spend at least 80% of their school day in general education classes; there are students with disabilities in practically every classroom in America's public schools and the greatest in-school factor impacting student achievement is instruction quality; what happens between teachers and students in our nation's classrooms has significant impact on student learning and achievement; and

Whereas, More than 80% of students who qualify for services under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) in the USA, have disabilities classified as mild to moderate disabilities such as, speech delays, learning disabilities, dyslexia and other impairments such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), sensory processing disorder or mental health conditions; students who receive Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or have 504 plans are a widely varied group with a variety of needs; the individual strengths and weaknesses of each student should be considered when making educational decisions; and

Whereas, There is a significant and persistent gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and students without disabilities; high expectations for all students helps develop an understanding that students with disabilities are first and foremost general education students; students with disabilities need quality general education instruction in addition to targeted interventions and accommodations, whereby access to assistive technology and accommodations significantly improves success in both special education and general education classrooms; furthermore time in general education settings often leads to fewer absences, less disruptive behavior, and better outcomes after high school as well as new learning opportunities for students without disabilities; and

Whereas, As has been shown in numerous studies such as "General Education Teachers' Goals and Expectations for their Included Students with Mild and Severe Disabilities"(Cameron & Cook, 2013), there is a crucial relationship between teacher expectations of students with disabilities and higher levels of achievement amongst these students; across all variables, parental aspirations and expectations for their children's educational academic achievement have the strongest relationship with achievement; students' mindsets also play a key role in their motivation and achievement; and

Whereas, Upholding high expectations for all students and promoting cooperative relationships between students of all abilities can reduce the high incidence of stigmatization and lack of disclosure among students with disabilities due to feelings of shame or fear of being bullied; students would benefit by forming positive relationships and friendships and learning how to be more at ease with a variety of people; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations encourage all stakeholders in the educational system – teachers (both general and special education), parents, administrators, and members of the community – to have and maintain high expectations for all students, including students with disabilities, including the students holding high expectations of themselves; and be it further

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Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations collaborate with the entire school community to include children with disabilities and their families in all school activities to promote cooperative relationships between students of all abilities through experiences such as peer mentoring, collaborative problem solving, and cooperative working groups, as well as through more casual or unstructured interactions, and including having a relevant general educator present at IEP meetings; and be it further

Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations support funding for ongoing pre-service training and professional development for all teachers regarding adapting instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom; accommodations that improve access to the general curriculum; and high expectations for all students with regards to both academics and behavior; and be it further

Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations support schools in implementing best practices in meeting the needs of diverse students through such practices as inclusion, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Response to Intervention (RTI), and any other similar instructional practices to support instruction from a Core content expert, and access to accommodations including assistive technology for students with disabilities, that these students be enabled to go as far as possible toward achieving their full potential and living a meaningful, fulfilling life.