

(Its nonpartisan policy prohibits the PTA from endorsing or opposing a candidate for public office. PTAs may support or oppose issues and principles.)

PTAs should:

- Find out when regular or special school board elections will be held.
- Be aware that, by law, PTA (as a non-profit association) **must** remain neutral in any election. PTA may take positions on **issues only**.
- Alert community members to the coming election (or appointment) of school board members.
- Emphasize citizen obligation to register and vote.
- Publicize the duties of a school board member and the qualifications of the candidates by providing profiles of all candidates in a non-biased manner.
- Sponsor candidate forums where all school board candidates are invited to speak. (This may be done in cooperation with other nonpartisan organizations, e.g., League of Women Voters.)

Encourage citizens to evaluate carefully each school board candidate on the ability to represent the whole community on all educational issues.

**Questions to consider in working more effectively with school boards:**

- How many members serve on the school board? What are their names and how can they be contacted?
- How are school board members chosen?
- How often and where does the school board meet? Are the meetings aired on cable television, radio, or via webcast?
- Does the school board reserve time on its agenda for the public to speak, as required by law?
- Does the school board have a written policy on parent involvement that agrees with PTA policy and the state mandate on parent involvement?
- What is the relationship of school-based management council(s) or other school/parent committees to the school board?
- Does the school board agenda include a report from PTA? Are agendas, minutes, reports, etc., available on a website?

**PARTNERS  
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Partnership, teamwork and cooperation are the building blocks of education leadership today. The school board and PTA can form an effective partnership to achieve quality public education.

PTA as an organization is devoted to the well-being of all children and youth. It provides parents, teachers and students with the means to participate and work effectively with the school board. At the same time, PTA helps the school board become informed about the community and the needs of children.

School boards are responsible for taking the lead in identifying the community's education needs and in meeting those needs through local school policies.

## The school board's role in education

The school board is charged with the responsibility for all aspects of education in a school district. The board acts in conformity with state and federal laws and California Department of Education rules and regulations. The board must also act in conformity with other state rules and regulations that impact school district activities (e.g., health and welfare, safety, etc.).

The school board is legally responsible for policies that govern the operation of the school district. The school board's main functions are:

- Policy-making.
- Choosing and evaluating the superintendent, and approving selection procedures for other personnel.

- Overseeing the educational programs and business operations of the district according to the California Education Code.
- Exercising fiscal authority. The board adopts the budget, approving all expenditures.
- Long-range planning and goal setting for educational programs of the district.
- Approval of curriculum and adoption of textbooks in accordance with state law and California State Department of Education regulations and local goals.
- Representing the public as the employer of school personnel in any collective bargaining process.

## School board structure and meetings

School districts and their governing boards vary greatly in size. Some families have children in one school district for elementary school and in another for high school. It is important to know the following:

- The geographic area and name of one's school district(s).
- The organizational structure of the school district(s) and the responsibilities of each part of that structure.
- How to encourage secondary student participation on school board's site management councils and high school forums.
- How to get an item for discussion on the school board agenda.
- How to address the school board and voice the PTA's position on issues.
- Which decisions the school board has the authority to make, and which are made by a school-based management council or other school/parent committee.

## Promoting cooperation between PTA and the school board

PTA bylaws encourage participation in the decision-making process to develop school policy.

Working cooperatively with the school board requires the knowledge and understanding of each participant's role, responsibility and authority.

PTA and school boards can be valuable partners by:

- Establishing regular two-way communication.
- Appointing liaisons to attend each other's respective board meetings and making reports at those meetings.
- Keeping members informed of school board/PTA actions and policies through reports in newsletters, meetings and special programs.
- Presenting PTA positions on issues.
- Reporting PTA concerns and parents' reactions to school policies and community problems.
- Promoting the school board's written parent involvement policy as mandated by California law.
- Ensuring that PTA has representation on school advisory committees and task forces.
- Inviting school board members to participate by helping plan and/or attend PTA meetings, conferences, workshops and open forums.
- Encouraging parents to attend school board meetings.
- Communicating important school issues being decided by the school board.

## PTA liaison to the school board

A PTA liaison to the school board is a valuable resource to both groups. The duties of the PTA liaison to the school board include:

- Knowing PTA policies, structure and position statements and voicing the PTA's consensus, not personal views or opinions, on an issue.
- Studying agendas and reports in advance of meetings.
- Introducing self to school board members, and clarifying the role of PTA liaison.
- Attending school board meetings regularly, and then reporting to PTA.
- Encouraging parents to attend school board meetings.
- Alerting the PTA unit, council or district PTA to issues that may require PTA study and action.
- Sharing *PTA in California*, National PTA's *Our Children*, PTA printed and electronic newsletters and other appropriate PTA publications with school board members.

## School board elections and PTA

Leadership on local school boards is of vital interest to all citizens.

School board members are either elected or appointed to serve a specified number of years. It is important for PTAs to be involved in either process.

PTA members, including local, state and National PTA officers, may serve on school boards, as long as they do not seek PTA endorsement or use their PTA office to promote their candidacy.