



## SANDY RUSSELL

*Vice President, Community Concerns*

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### DUTIES

- Director of community concerns and outreach
- Chair of the Community Youth Project
- Member of District Annual Holiday Luncheon Committee
- Oversees:
  - Diversity and Inclusion Chairman
  - Camps Liaison
  - LACOE Juvenile Court School



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First District

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# COMMUNITY ISSUES AFFECT OUR KIDS



## COMMUNITY ISSUES CONCERN US ALL

Our children can't learn, grow and succeed in school if they're facing major challenges at home, in their neighborhoods and in their broader communities.

PTA's mission doesn't say we only focus on schools — it says that we work to “positively impact the lives of all children and families.” That means seeking support for abused children, advocating for foster kids, preventing bullying and much more.

You can help! Join your local PTA, get involved and help make changes for all our kids, at all times and in all places.

## WHAT ARE COMMUNITY CONCERNS?

Community concerns are those issues that impact our families and students in our communities and schools including, but not limited to, child abuse, child-care facilities and personnel licensing, citizenship, coordination of children's services, delinquency prevention, disaster preparedness, discipline, environmental protection, family preservation, child support, foster care, homelessness, juvenile justice, missing and exploited children, proprietary preschools, safety education, school attendance, school safety, youth violence, vandalism, gangs, cults and the effects of drugs and alcohol. While California State PTA advocates on legislation and policies involving community concerns, which has a statewide impact on families and youth, YOU as a member of your local PTA can help identify local community concerns and work to bring positive change to your community.

Across the country, students, families and educators experience vastly different education systems that either support—or hinder—the ability for all children to reach their full potential. These differences are often due to disparities in opportunities, access and financial resources—and whether or not parents are respected as equal partners in their child's education.

To be part of the solution, National PTA recognizes that we have our own work to do to advance diversity, equity and inclusion across the association and recently adopted the following definitions and beliefs to help PTA leaders:

- ➔ Re-commit to diversity, equity and inclusion in their PTA by communicating these beliefs and definitions with other PTA members
- ➔ Critically reflect on areas where their PTA has had successes and where it has had challenges when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion



## Diversity

Diversity is representation of, and respect for, people from different backgrounds and identities—including but not limited to race, culture, religion, socio-economic status, age, geographic area, sexual orientation and gender identification, language, learning style and physical appearance. It also involves bringing different ideas, perspectives, lived experiences, talents, values and worldviews to the table to represent the broad variety of children, caregivers, educators and communities within the PTA family.

### We Believe Diversity is Our Strength...

We represent parents, caregivers, educators and communities of all children, which enables us to best achieve PTA's mission to make every child's potential a reality. Our collective backgrounds, perspectives and ideas allow us to best reflect the rich fabric of 21st century children, families, educators and community members—and create the strongest future and direction for PTA.

*To embody and live this belief, PTA volunteers and staff must:*

- ➔ Acknowledge and appreciate individual ideas, knowledge and values that are different from our own.
- ➔ Seek out and learn from a diverse set of perspectives, skills and experiences, staying open to the unfamiliar and possibly uncomfortable.
- ➔ Actively recruit and elect a team of leaders who represent the school community you serve.
- ➔ Support units from less represented or resourced areas, backgrounds and perspectives.



## Equity

Equity provides fairness in resources, opportunities and outcomes so that all communities get what they need to be engaged and successful. This moves beyond an "equal across the board" approach to:

1. Recognize and address bias and privilege.
2. Understand and attend to specific individual and community needs, providing additional resources to those with greater needs.

## We Believe Equity Drives Our Mission...

With schools facing challenges like shrinking budgets and increasing educational inequity, PTA is more important than ever. We continually learn and change to reflect an increasingly complex and changing 21st century landscape in which unforeseen crises can affect our children, families and communities. We seize opportunities to build and share new models and ways of working on behalf of children.

*To embody and live this value, PTA volunteers and staff must:*

- Champion fair, just and data-informed approaches to children's educational success, health and well-being.
- Prioritize and advocate for innovative, sustainable solutions that work for a diverse range of children and families, especially those underrepresented and/or marginalized in our communities.
- Persist in the face of challenges and hold ourselves and our partners—including educators and policymakers—accountable.



## Inclusion

Inclusion is actions, behaviors and social norms that ensure all people feel they are safe, welcomed and that they belong. This means putting diversity into action with skill and intentionality to ensure everyone feels respected, supported and valued—and can fully participate with equal voice and right to be heard. This includes actively seeking out voices that have been traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized.

## We Believe Collaboration Must Be Inclusive...

We can only achieve our mission and vision in full collaboration and partnership with the broadest possible set of volunteers, staff, educators, schools and communities. We foster an association where everyone feels they belong, are integral to achieving our vision and have the opportunity to flourish and contribute at the highest level. That means tending to power dynamics where they occur and setting up a level playing field for all to engage in our work.

*To embody and live this belief, PTA volunteers and staff must:*

- Work cooperatively and respectfully with colleagues with different roles, goals and approaches.
- Share information, tools, resources and leadership opportunities among association members, partners and communities to increase the impact of our collective work.
- Engage a diverse range of voices and lived experiences from members and prospective members—and seek to meet individuals and communities where they are—especially those currently or traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized in our association.
- Solicit stakeholder input, incorporate it in visible and meaningful ways, and share credit.
- Account for cultural, status and power dynamics in our many relationships.

En todo el país, los estudiantes, las familias y los educadores experimentan sistemas educativos considerablemente diferentes que respaldan –u obstaculizan– la posibilidad de los niños de alcanzar su pleno potencial. A menudo, estas diferencias se deben a la disparidad de oportunidades, acceso y recursos financieros, y a si los padres son respetados o no como socios igualitarios en la educación de sus niños.

A fin de ser parte de la solución, National PTA reconoce que tenemos mucho por hacer para avanzar con la diversidad, la equidad y la inclusión en toda la asociación, por eso, recientemente, hemos adoptado las siguientes definiciones y creencias a fin de ayudar a los líderes de PTA:

- ➔ Volver a comprometerse con la diversidad, la equidad, la inclusión en su PTA comunicando estas creencias y definiciones a otros miembros de PTA.
- ➔ Reflexionar de manera crítica sobre las áreas en las que sus PTA han tenido éxito y en las que han tenido retos en lo que respecta a la diversidad, la equidad y la inclusión.



## La Diversidad

La diversidad es la representación y el respeto de las personas de diferentes orígenes e identidades, incluyendo, entre otras cosas, la raza, la cultura, la religión, el estatus socioeconómico, la edad, la zona geográfica, la orientación sexual, la identificación de género, el idioma, el estilo de aprendizaje y el aspecto físico. Esto también implica sumar a la mesa distintas ideas, perspectivas, experiencias de vida, talentos, valores y cosmovisiones para representar a la amplia variedad de niños, guardianes, educadores y comunidades de la familia de PTA.

### Creemos que la Diversidad es Nuestra Fortaleza...

Representamos a los padres, los guardianes, los educadores y las comunidades de todos los niños, lo que nos permite cumplir mejor la misión de PTA de hacer el potencial de cada niño una realidad. Nuestros orígenes, perspectivas e ideas colectivas nos permiten reflejar mejor el rico entramado de los niños, las familias, los educadores y los miembros de las comunidades del siglo XXI y crear la dirección y el futuro más sólidos posibles para PTA.

*Para encarnar y vivir esta creencia, los voluntarios y el personal de PTA deben:*

- ➔ Reconocer y apreciar las ideas, los conocimientos y los valores individuales que difieren de los propios.
- ➔ Buscar y aprender perspectivas, herramientas y experiencias diversas, manteniendo la mente abierta a lo poco conocido y posiblemente incómodo.
- ➔ Reclutar activamente y elegir un equipo de líderes que representen a la comunidad escolar a la que asiste.
- ➔ Respalda unidades de las perspectivas, los orígenes y las áreas menos representadas o de menores recursos.



## La Equidad

La equidad brinda imparcialidad en los recursos, las oportunidades y los resultados, de modo que todas las comunidades obtienen lo que necesitan para participar y tener éxito. Esto va más allá de un enfoque de “equidad de forma generalizada” para:

1. Reconocer y abordar las parcialidades y los privilegios.
2. Comprender y atender las necesidades específicas de los individuos y la comunidad brindando recursos adicionales a los que tienen mayores necesidades.

## Creemos que la Equidad Impulsa Nuestra Misión...

Puesto que las escuelas están enfrentando desafíos, como la reducción de presupuestos y una mayor inequidad educativa, PTA es más importante que nunca. Continuamente, aprendemos y cambiamos para reflejar el panorama cada vez más complejo y cambiante del siglo XXI, en el que crisis imprevistas pueden afectar a nuestros niños, familias y comunidades. Aprovechamos las oportunidades para desarrollar y compartir nuevos modelos y maneras de trabajar en nombre de los niños.

*Para encarnar y vivir este valor, los voluntarios y el personal de PTA deben:*

- ➔ Abogar por enfoques justos, respaldados por datos, para lograr el éxito educativo, la salud y el bienestar de los niños.
- ➔ Priorizar y abogar por soluciones innovadoras y sostenibles que sean propicias para un rango diverso de niños y familias, en especial los que están insuficientemente representados y/o marginados en nuestras comunidades.
- ➔ Persistir ante los retos y hacer responsables a nuestros aliados, incluidos los educadores y los formuladores de políticas públicas, y a nosotros mismos.



## La Inclusión

La inclusión son las acciones, los comportamientos y las normas sociales que garantizan que todas las personas se sientan seguras, bien recibidas y que pertenecen. Esto significa poner la diversidad en acción con aptitudes e intencionalidad para asegurar que todos se sientan respetados, respaldados y valorados, y puedan participar plenamente en igualdad y con el derecho a ser escuchados. Esto incluye buscar de manera activa a las voces que tradicionalmente han sido insuficientemente representadas o marginadas.

## Creemos que la Colaboración Debe Ser Inclusiva...

Solo podemos cumplir nuestra misión y nuestra visión si colaboramos y nos asociamos plenamente con el grupo más amplio posible de voluntarios, personal, educadores, escuelas y comunidades. Fomentamos una asociación en la que todos sientan que pertenecen, que son integrales para cumplir nuestra visión y que tienen la oportunidad de prosperar y contribuir en el más alto nivel. Eso implica ocuparse de las dinámicas de poder cuando aparecen y configurar un campo de juego nivelado para que todos participen de nuestro trabajo.

*Para encarnar y vivir esta creencia, los voluntarios y el personal de PTA deben:*

- ➔ Trabajar cooperativa y respetuosamente con colegas de distintos roles, metas y enfoques.
- ➔ Compartir información, herramientas, recursos y oportunidades de liderazgo con los miembros de la asociación, los aliados y las comunidades a fin de incrementar el impacto de nuestro trabajo colectivo.
- ➔ Captar una amplia gama de voces y experiencias de vida de los miembros y los posibles miembros—y tratar de conocer a las personas y las comunidades en su lugar—, en especial aquellas que actualmente o tradicionalmente han estado insuficientemente representadas y/o marginadas en nuestra asociación.
- ➔ Solicitar la opinión de los actores, incorporarla de maneras visibles y significativas, y compartir el crédito.
- ➔ Considerar las dinámicas de poder, estatus y culturales que se presentan en las relaciones.



# How to Welcome Diverse Perspectives into your PTA

PTAs are strongest when their leaders and members reflect the diversity of their own communities. Multiple perspectives help to solve tough problems by bringing a variety of solutions to the table. Try these five strategies to help build a more inclusive PTA.

## 1. Learn more about the community your PTA is serving.

- + **Don't** assume you know what is happening in the community or that you understand the different cultures represented.
- + **Do** ask questions to understand:
  - What are the different cultural values of families in the community?
  - What languages other than English do families in our community speak?
  - Are the PTA and school mindful of the diverse needs of families?
  - What are some of the stigmas that could affect PTA involvement?

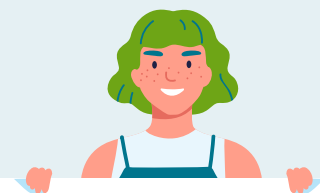
## 2. Avoid tokenism.

- + **Don't** ask a parent to be the lead of a subgroup simply because they belong to it. Your one international parent that is a PTA member shouldn't be in charge of inviting the other parents to the multicultural festival.
- + **Do** reach out to minority populations within your school for all events. The outreach should be performed throughout the year, not only for multicultural events.

Sacajawea PTA in Washington State created a parent-led equity team. The equity team plans and organizes inclusive schoolwide PTA events and helps ensure that PTA activities are being reviewed through an anti-bias lens.

### Equity initiatives include:

- + Bringing culturally diverse speakers and performers to school events and assemblies
- + Creating a cross-cultural events calendar for the weekly school newsletter
- + Translating school and PTA communications into multiple languages
- + Collecting immigration resources and information
- + Securing technology grants to give students increased computer access at school
- + Providing anti-bias teaching resources
- + Organizing workshops and trainings for staff, parents and students



“Whenever we get a few Latino leaders in, they tend to get overworked and burned out. They end up being stretched out the thinnest out of our leaders....As we increase our leadership, we need to make sure that they get to provide leadership and not get stuck in a rut of always being used as translators or mediators.”

– Arkansas PTA

### 3. Build trust.

- + **Don't** assume you are in a position of trust because you are a PTA leader.
- + **Do** work on building a meaningful relationship with stakeholders and families.
  - Open up first and share your personal story.
  - Be mindful of hesitations to provide input or information. This can be due to immigration concerns, data privacy or basic lack of trust.
  - Build partnerships with trusted community leaders or influencers by approaching local community meeting places to offer support, such as churches, community centers, community organizations, libraries, etc.

### 4. Cater to the needs of the community.

- + **Do** ask questions to understand their needs. For example, immigrant families or families of kids with special needs may need additional information about navigating the sometimes complicated school system.
- + **Don't** approach families about the benefits of PTA membership without knowing their needs.

### 5. Find alternative meeting locations.

- + **Don't** assume that the school is the most convenient place to meet. There may be fear, discomfort or lack of trust in going to the school. This may range from a parent who fears the school may question their legal status, to a parent who has not had a positive experience at the school.
- + **Do** offer families alternate options such as community centers, a church or even a virtual meeting.

#### CHALLENGE:

Scott PTA in Oregon found themselves asking, "How can we change how we do things to better meet the needs of all of our families?"

#### SOLUTION:

Scott PTA changed the style of their meetings to be more family engagement focused and made meetings more accessible by holding some at community centers where families felt more comfortable.



"We have taken an intentional approach to diversity, inclusion and equity, shifting from theory to practice. Essentially, families now feel welcomed and valued as we have created safe spaces for them to share their stories and experiences."

– Durham County Council PTA

