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MAKING SURE YOUR CHILD GETS THE EDUCATION THEY DESERVE

A Guide for Parents

Your child has a right to attend and succeed in a great public school. Regardless of income, ethnicity, family circumstances, disability or school readiness, all children are entitled to an education that will help them reach their full academic, professional and personal potential. As a parent or guardian, you are the best advocate for ensuring this happens.

The importance of a hands-on approach

While all parents want their child to do well in school, many don't realize that personally monitoring and guiding their child's education has a huge impact on academic success. In fact, playing this role has never been more important.

Today's high school graduates face a highly competitive global economy, which favors workers with greater education and training than their parents had. Whether your child wants to be in education, finance, politics, art, science, manufacturing or virtually any profession, technology and the rapid pace of societal change have upped the minimum skills required.

It is your moral and legal right to demand a rigorous, high-quality education that enables your child to thrive in the world. This includes insisting on:

✓ **Up-to-date textbooks and technology:**

The quality of the resources available in your school is a good indicator of how much administrators and the school board are investing in keeping up with modern education and workforce demands. Examine your child's school books and ask for new or replacement books if necessary. Tour the school to see what type of technology exists. Make sure there are computers available for student use in the classroom or library. Ask about audio-visual equipment for incorporating digital media into instruction and school activities.

✓ **A safe and nurturing learning environment:**

Unfortunately, too many districts have allowed school buildings to deteriorate or failed to upgrade them to reflect safety and technological advances, and accommodate increases in student enrollment. The ideal learning environment includes small classes with a low teacher-to-student ratio. School buildings should be welcoming and well-maintained, with a modern cafeteria and gymnasium, hygienic restrooms, a well-stocked library with a librarian and a wellness room with a full-time nurse. Parents and communities must hold politicians accountable for providing the funding needed to keep local public schools in excellent condition.



✓ **Strong parent-teacher communication:**

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone else. Share your child's strengths, weaknesses or any special concerns with teachers, so they can adapt lessons to match your child's interests and learning style. The more teachers know about your child's daily life, language and culture, the more meaningful they can make classroom experiences. Attend parent-teacher conferences. Contact your child's teacher whenever you have questions or concerns. Engagement in your school community, like when you join your student's PTA or PTSA, sit in on a class, or volunteer for a field trip has a benefit for your child and others in the school too. The important thing is to stay connected, so you can advocate for your child.

✓ **Transparency around learning objectives and tests:**

Public schools should clearly set and communicate expectations to both parents and students. You should know the learning objectives at the beginning of each new class and school year, as well as how and when your child will be evaluated against those objectives (through both routine classroom tests, projects, and/or state standardized assessments). Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, schools are required to notify parents about their child's test results, whether the test was administered by the school or a supplemental provider. And raw data is not sufficient. Don't be afraid to ask for an interpretation of your child's scores, information on how the scores will be used and advice on how to help your child do better if needed. Also make sure that tests are not the only criteria being used to judge your child's performance. Ask the teacher what percentage of your child's grade is determined by tests vs. homework, class participation and other factors. (See our brochure "Testing at Your Child's School" for more.)

✓ **Information on school performance:**

Ask your school for up-to-date information about its academic standing, graduation rates and students' access to advanced coursework compared to others in your district or state. They are required by law to provide this data. If your school has fallen behind, hold your politicians accountable for more funding, specialized staff, teacher training and other resources. Check your state's board of education website regularly to stay on top of issues that impact access to quality education.



✓ **High expectations:**

When schools set high expectations, students work harder and aim higher because they learn to believe in themselves and their future. Make sure the school is communicating its expectations in a format that makes sense to, and inspires, your child.

✓ **Access to services and activities, regardless of language or income:**

Schools should offer communications in your family's native language, whether in print, online or in person. All students should have access to school-linked social services, lunch programs and remedial education if needed. And extracurricular activities should be open to all. If your child is having trouble finding or gaining access to an activity, be their advocate. Contact the school, ask questions and know your rights.

The importance of learning at home

Learning doesn't stop once your child leaves the classroom. In fact, your child's academic success requires that they study at home and get support and encouragement from family members. A few things you should be doing:



✓ **Supervise homework:** Know what your child has been assigned, how much your child has done and whether your child needs extra help. Request a curriculum outline from the teacher, so that you can help your child prepare in advance for classes and tests.

✓ **Create a quiet place to read and study:** Insist that your child turn off the TV and put away their cell phone while studying. Create a designated, quiet, comfortable and well-lit space in the house just for studying.

✓ **Teach organizational skills:** The older your child gets, the more work and activities they need to balance. Make sure your child has a daily planner (this could be an app on their phone) and teach them to write down all commitments, plan ahead and check things off as they go. Teach your child how to prioritize and meet deadlines. If your child struggles with procrastination, help them break large tasks into smaller ones that seem more manageable.

✓ **Get extra help sooner rather than later:** If your child is struggling, don't wait to inquire about after-school tutoring and counseling. If the school doesn't offer these, they should make other recommendations. You can also talk to the teacher about an individualized learning plan, so you can both better monitor your child's progress.

The importance of family involvement

Families can play a major role in academic success. Aunts, uncles, grandparents and other adults in your child's life should grab every opportunity to let them know that education is important, that they have high expectations for your child, and that they're available to help.

Adults in the house should help your child set goals and encourage them to create a plan of action, whether that's getting up on time, improving classroom attendance, starting assignments further in advance, raising their grades one step at a time or finding study partners at school.

Above all, in daily conversations, talk about quality education like a gift, a right and a journey—one your child can freely pursue, secure in the knowledge that they have your full support.



Resources

National Education Association:

[NEA.org](https://www.nea.org)

National PTA:

[PTA.org](https://www.pta.org)

The College Board:

[CollegeBoard.org](https://collegeboard.org)

Be A Learning Hero:

[BeALearningHero.org](https://www.beallearninghero.org)

Homework Help Desk:

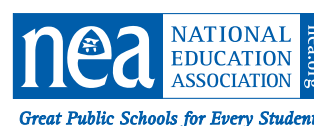
[HomeworkHelpDesk.org](https://www.homeworkhelpdesk.org)

Other Resources

There is a range of other Parents' Guides to help you ensure your child thrives at school. Here are just a few examples:

- ✓ Preparing Your Child for School
- ✓ Raising Ready Readers
- ✓ Raising Scientifically Literate Children
- ✓ Helping Your Child with Today's Math

For these and other guides, visit [NEA.org/Parents/NEAResources-Parents.html](https://www.nea.org/Parents/NEAResources-Parents.html) or [pta.org/familyguides](https://www.pta.org/familyguides)



For more information about PTA or to join, visit [pta.org/join](https://www.pta.org/join)

For more information about NEA, visit [nea.org](https://www.nea.org)

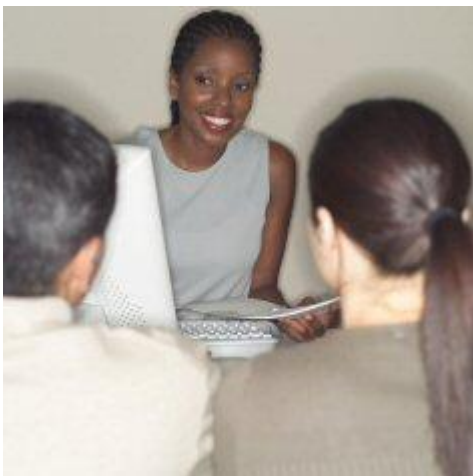
Principals and Parents Working Together

Developed by National PTA with the help of parents and principals, these tips are part of an overall strategy for building relationships with principals to improve student achievement..

We know that the main reason people join PTA is to gain access to the organized, high quality parent involvement opportunities that will help their children achieve in school. This list is one National PTA resource you can keep and refer to as you bridge the gap between home and school, initiating conversations and implementing programs or events that will enrich the learning experiences of your school's children.

These tips are based on the six [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#) developed by PTA:

1. **A principal can host a “welcome” night** where all the parents are invited to the school and the principal gives an opening address, establishes basic expectations for the year, and invites parents to ask questions. Provide a form on which parents can write their contact information, best times to contact them, and preferred methods of communication. The principal can provide the same information to parents.
2. **Parents can establish PTAs** that are inclusive and representative of the school community's cultures, family structures (single parent, blended, etc.), and abilities. (Invite the principal to become a member.) PTAs must value and embrace all parents and caregivers in order to implement successful school programs.



Principal-parent dialogue is key to student success.



3. **Invite the principal to take part in developing the PTA's plan of work.** The principal can work with the PTA to set goals for their collaboration for the year.
4. **Make the principal-parent dialogue visible.** Invite the principal to write an article for the PTA newsletter or listserv. Ask him or her to host coffees or "chats with the principal," inviting bilingual parents to translate as necessary.
5. **Network with community establishments** (hospitals, community centers, banks, libraries) to get free services or informational sessions for the school. Before moving ahead, a PTA might ask the principal for a list of priorities regarding services for the school and its families.
6. **Invite community groups and youth-serving organizations** to school shows, sporting events, and showcases of service-learning projects, thus publicizing what the students have accomplished. Ask these groups how you can work toward shared goals in support of the school.
7. **Carry out fundraisers tied to specific goals relevant to the whole school community.** Examples of such PTA fundraising goals might include campus beautification, providing school playing fields, or underwriting classroom field trips. Remember the 3:1 rule, a minimum of 3 programs for every 1 fundraiser.
8. **Nominate the school or principal for awards,** including parents in the recognition process.
9. **Encourage two-way messaging.** Establish a principal approved voice-mail system in which teachers regularly leave two-minute voice-mail messages for parents about the classroom curriculum, and parents can leave messages for teachers as they strive to support their children's homework and study habits.
10. **Promote health and nutrition.** Form a task force of parents, the school principal, and pertinent school district staff to examine the school lunch program. (This refers to schools not participating in the federal school lunch program.) Look at the time allotted for lunch; the food options available; and the accessibility, pricing, and placement of healthy foods. Make recommendations for change if necessary.



GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR SCHOLARSHIPS HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR DREAMS

Your education doesn't end once you walk across that high school graduation stage.

That's why California State PTA has two scholarships to help you achieve your college dreams and your life goals.

OPPORTUNITIES EACH YEAR

Two California State PTA scholarships are available for your application:

- **\$500 Volunteer Service Scholarship** — This scholarship recognizes graduating seniors for their volunteer service in schools and communities, allowing them to register for courses at accredited colleges, universities, trade or technical schools. Applicants must be PTA members graduating from a California high school between January 1 and June 30 of the current academic year.
- **\$500 Dr. Ralph E. White Graduating Senior Scholarship** – Honoring the volunteer and public-service legacy of Dr. Ralph E. White and his wife, Eleanor, this additional scholarship provides \$500 each to two successful applicants of the Volunteer Service Scholarship who intend to pursue a career in a medical field.

Applications, reference forms and all supporting documents must be received in the California State PTA office by February 1. All applicants are notified of their status in March. Scholarship winners receive a letter of congratulations and recognition certificate from California State PTA along with a check. Applications are available each fall.

NATIONAL PTA® **REFLECTIONS**®

Explore the Arts and *Express Yourself*

National PTA's **Reflections** program provides opportunities for recognition and access to the arts which boost student confidence and success in the arts and in life.

Each year, over 300,000 students in Pre-K through Grade 12 create original works of art in response to a student-selected theme.

This 50+ year-old program helps them explore their own thoughts, feelings and ideas, develop artistic literacy, increase confidence and find a love for learning that will help them become more successful in school and in life.

The 2022–2023 Reflections theme is ***Show Your Voice!***

Students submit their completed works of art in one or all of the available arts categories: Dance Choreography, Film Production, Literature, Music Composition, Photography, Visual Arts.

Students participate in the appropriate division for their grade: Primary (Pre-K - Grade 2), Intermediate (Grades 3-5), Middle School (Grades 6-8), High School (Grades 9-12), Special Artist (All grades welcome). *Students who identify as having a disability and may receive services under IDEA or ADA: Section 504 may enter in the Special Artist Division or grade division most closely aligned to their functional abilities.**

Any child enrolled in Pre-K – Grade 12 can participate from a PTA association in good standing. More detailed information will be available in summer 2022. Please visit our website at www.pta1.org or send your inquiry to Reflections@pta1.org