



## NEW YORK STATE PTA GUIDANCE FOR PTAs ON SCHOOL CLOSINGS, CONSOLIDATIONS AND REORGANIZATIONS

School districts in New York State face declining enrollment, escalating costs, limited increases in state aid, increasing state mandates and a limited ability to raise taxes as a result of the 2% tax cap levy. As a result of these pressures, school districts are forced to look at the configurations of their schools with the objective of seeking efficiencies and strategies to control the ever increasing costs of providing a high quality education for all children.

The concept of any type of change to a school district's current configuration of schools is emotional and unsettling for parents, teachers, administrators and children. The PTA can be an important part of this process by approaching it intelligently and creatively. The PTA's primary concern should be the impact on children and their education.

Many school districts will seek community input prior to making the decision to close, consolidate or reorganize the schools in their district by forming a community advisory committee. There is no exact timeline for this process as some decisions will be made quickly and others may take years. PTAs should seek to participate on this committee in order to have input in the decision-making process.

Additionally, a PTA Study Committee (referenced in Section 9 of the *NYS PTA Resource Guide*) should be established to engage family, school and community and foster mutual understanding. A committee may be formed at either the council level with all units represented or at the unit level with broad representation.

PTAs should:

1. Recognize and understand the laws governing school board actions regarding school closings (see page 4 of this document).
2. The committee should:
  - a. Work from a wide base by including a cross section of the community.
  - b. Develop a plan of action.
  - c. Meet with the superintendent/principal to obtain the following:
    1. A copy of the five (5) year plan required by the State Education Department
    2. Board of Education policies regarding class size, transportation, etc.
    3. Enrollment figures and projections
    4. Current and projected room utilization
    5. Laws governing the disposal and rental of school property
    6. Building utilization options
    7. Transportation requirements – state and local
  - d. Review all materials.
  - e. Tour all facilities.
  - f. Collect information from reliable sources.
  - g. Evaluate findings objectively making sure all viewpoints are respected and included.
  - h. Obtain approval from executive board, unit and/or council membership.
  - i. Present approved committee's recommendations to the school board.

- j. Publicize approved recommendations through PTA newsletters, informational meetings, website, etc.
- 3. Ask questions of administration and board of education.
- 4. Disseminate factual information to members and obtain their input.
- 5. Establish criteria PTA considers essential to the educational needs of the school population.
- 6. Submit criteria for unit membership/council approval.
- 7. Present input to the administration and board of education.

After a specific proposal for closing, consolidating or reorganizing schools has been made by the board of education, it may elicit a great deal of emotion in the schools affected. Units may attempt to keep their schools open. All schools should be involved since there are receiving schools as well as closing schools, and often attendance lines are reviewed within a district.

PTAs should have meetings with administration to:

- 1. Obtain answers to the following questions concerning the proposal:
  - a. Are board of education policies affected? How?
  - b. Will existing programs be affected?
    - 1. Class size
    - 2. Grade level mix
    - 3. Course offerings
    - 4. Curriculum
    - 5. Extra-curricular activities
  - c. Will building use be affected? Will special areas remain such as library, art, music, etc.?
  - d. What are the costs and anticipated savings?
  - e. Will the safety of children be affected?
  - f. How will the closed school building(s) be used?
- 2. Share information with the community.
- 3. PTAs may not only react to the proposal but they may suggest alternatives.

When a final decision about closing, consolidating or reorganizing schools in a district has been voted on by the board of education and announced to the public, the PTA should work with the administration to effect a smooth transition.

The PTA should provide activities to help families adjust to the “new” school:

- 1. Joint PTA meetings of the closing and receiving schools.
- 2. Joint executive board meetings of the closing and receiving schools.
- 3. Orientation meeting(s) for families whose children will be attending the “new” school.
- 4. Encourage administration to sponsor a tour of the “new” school(s) for parents and to meet with the staff at a pre-arranged time.
- 5. In cooperation with administration provide information about the “new” school for parents to use as a resource.
- 6. Provide opportunities for incoming PTA members to serve as officers, chairmen, etc.

The PTA should provide activities to help children adjust to the “new” school:

- 1. Children should tour the “new” school to familiarize themselves with the building.
- 2. A joint program of some sort can be held to help the children meet one another.
- 3. A special effort to work with any grades where students will be in the “new” school for only one year.

**Important to Remember:**

The Board of Education has the ultimate legal responsibility to designate the school(s) that will be closed and/or included in a consolidation plan.

Most children adjust rapidly to the “new” school. It is often the adults who find the adjustment difficult. Adults can help children by being sure that negative comments are not made in the presence of children and by being supportive of the children’s apprehension. It is important that any discontent with the final proposal not be shared with the children. At this time, the natural apprehension of the children requires the support and encouragement of their parents and the other adults (teachers, staff and entire community) around them.

Guidance for PTAs for dissolving a PTA when a school is closing:

1. Contact your Region Director for support and assistance. ([www.nyspta.org/contact/contact.cfm](http://www.nyspta.org/contact/contact.cfm))
2. Unit should hold a general membership meeting for the purpose of dissolution.
3. Written notice of the meeting should be sent to the Region Director and the Region Director shall be invited to this meeting.
4. General membership must vote on how to use any unbudgeted funds expected to be left at the end of the year.
5. Units have used any one or a combination of the following to disburse remaining funds:
  - a. Donated it to the receiving school(s) in proportion to the number of students entering each school.
  - b. Donated it to the council or a PTA scholarship fund.
  - c. Given each student a small memento at the end of the year.
6. After the dissolution meeting, the unit shall send notice to the Region Director stating that the PTA has been dissolved and the date of the dissolution.
7. Treasurer’s books should be sent to the Region Director.
8. All other materials can be turned over to the council or the “new” school’s PTA.

Guidance for PTAs of the schools who will receive students and families of closing/reconfigured school:

1. Contact your Region Director for support and assistance. ([www.nyspta.org/contact/contact.cfm](http://www.nyspta.org/contact/contact.cfm))
2. Provide opportunities for families of the closing/reconfigured schools to attend PTA meetings of the receiving school(s).
3. Joint meeting of the executive boards of the schools involved.
4. Review unit bylaws with regard to the process for the election of officers (see Unit Bylaws Article VII).
5. Election of officers must be held in the month provided for in the bylaws.
6. Eligibility of members from feeder units may be determined by the unit procedures.
7. If there is no provision for members from feeder unit, a nominee can join after the nomination is made.

## **New York Education - Article 9 - § 402-A Procedures for Closing a School Building**

### § 402-a. Procedures for closing a school building.

1. At least six months in advance of a proposed school closing, the trustees or board of education of a school district in which such building is located are hereby authorized and recommended to establish an advisory committee on school building utilization to investigate the educational impact of such a closing. In a city with a population of one million or more, when the city board is considering the closing of any school building, such city board is hereby authorized and recommended to establish such advisory committee on school building utilization for schools within its jurisdiction and delegate to the appropriate community school board the responsibility for appointing such a committee for any school within the jurisdiction of such community school board. Each committee may be comprised of but not limited to school district authorities, teaching and nonteaching personnel, parents of pupils who attend public schools in the district, other residents of the district, and representatives from business, labor and local government. Such committee, if established, shall prepare in writing an educational impact statement which shall consider the criteria stated in subdivision two of this section.
2. The factors to be considered by the committee in the educational impact statement shall include, but not be limited to:
  - (a) The current and projected pupil enrollment, the prospective need for such building, the ramifications of such closing upon the community, initial costs and savings resulting from such closing, the potential disposability of the closed school;
  - (b) Possible use of such school building for other educational programs or administrative services;
  - (c) The effect of such closing on personnel needs, and on the costs of instruction, administration, transportation and other support services;
  - (d) Type, age and physical condition of such building, outstanding indebtedness, maintenance and energy costs, recent or planned improvements for the building, and such building's special features;
  - (e) Ability of the other schools in the affected district to accommodate pupils if such school building closes; and
  - (f) Possible shared utilization of space in such school building during or after regular school hours, as permitted in section four hundred fourteen of this chapter.
3.
  - (a) Such educational impact statement shall be filed with the board of education or in a city with a population of one million or more, with the city board and/or the appropriate community school board. Such board of education shall publish a notice of such proposed closing in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the community once a week for two weeks, and shall post a notice conspicuously in the affected school district, which shall also be circulated to elected state and local public officials who represent the affected communities.
  - (b) After the statement has been filed and circulated, the board of education, and in a city with a population of one million or more, the city board or, where applicable, the community school board shall hold a public hearing to evaluate the impact of the proposed closing on the affected district. Such hearing shall be held within sixty days of the issuance of the educational impact statement at times and places convenient and accessible to the public. Notice of such hearing shall be published by such board of education in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the community once a week for two weeks, and shall be posted conspicuously in the affected school district, and shall also be circulated to elected state and local public officials who represent the affected communities. At such hearing, factors enumerated in subdivision two of this section shall be considered and alternatives may be presented by interested parties.
  - (c) The board of education shall render a decision at a regular or special meeting, the results of which shall be recorded and made available to the public. In a city having a population of one million or more, the community school board shall submit written recommendations for schools within its jurisdiction to the city board. The city board shall render a decision for all proposed school building closings at a regular or special meeting, the results of which shall be recorded and made available to the public.