

# Document #7

## The Benefits of a Year-round Nominating Committee



by Marilyn Anderson

PTAs, heed this advice from National PTA President Shirley Igo: "If you truly want the possibility to strengthen the leadership of your PTA, you'll opt for a year-round nominating committee whose members look at who's really best for each position."

That's what National PTA did when its governance was restructured in June 2001. Both Igo and Lee Ann Clark, National PTA director of field service, agree National PTA's nominating and leadership development committee is a model to others.

"Having a year-round nominating committee is an opportunity to evaluate a PTA's needs and meet those needs with people who have those specific qualifications," Igo explained.

"Someone needs to accept the onus of finding suitable candidates for office," said Clark. "The president can't do it. He or she already has a full-time position leading the organization, not to mention the fact that nominating leaders is a conflict of interest for PTA presidents."

According to Sue Gatton, chair of National PTAs' nominating and leadership development committee, many PTA's bylaws say the nominating committee should be elected in the spring. "My elementary school PTA had a committee elected at the same time as the officers," Gatton said. "That way we could watch throughout the year and see what leadership skills should be developed."

Clark advised that PTAs take care establishing a nominating committee from the onset so there aren't any issues of impropriety. Here are some suggestions to help. For additional

### Establishing a Year-round Nominating Committee

- If your PTA does not have a nominating committee in place, use nomination referral forms and enable individuals to self-nominate for committee positions.
- Hold an election at a PTA meeting for members to elect the nominating committee to serve a term as set forth in your bylaws.
- Elect a committee chair.
- Create a referral form and make it available to members to refer themselves or others.
- Keep the elected officers and committee chairs informed of individuals demonstrating leadership potential.
- Periodically report out to the general membership, identifying vacant positions, providing committee/job descriptions, and requesting nominations.

information, refer to your state PTA office and the "Handbook and Bylaws" section of *National PTA's Annual Resources for PTAs*.



#### Job Description:

Members of the nominating committee shall:

- Be a member of a local PTA
- Serve a term of X years [as outlined in your PTA's bylaws]
- Identify characteristics and skill sets needed in the leadership of XYZ PTA
- Screen, evaluate, and nominate candidates for officers, member representatives to the board of directors, and committee members
- Recommend continuing education that enhances leadership development within the PTA
- Advise the president on the appointment of committee/task force members
- Participate fully as a member of the nominating committee

and to feel comfortable having open, honest conversations about the leadership needs of their PTA.

#### **Electing the committee chair**

The chair of the committee is selected according to the provisions of the bylaws. Gatton said some PTAs have their general membership elect the nominating committee chair, some elect the person receiving the most ballots, and still others have the committee members themselves elect their chair, which is the case for National PTA.

#### **Electing nominating committee members**

Just as National PTA's nominating and leadership development committee members are elected by voting delegates at the annual convention, PTAs at the state, district, council, or local level must also be sure their committee members are elected, not selected, by general membership. Keep in mind that the PTA president may not be an ex officio member and may not exert any influence on the selection of nominees.

#### **Establishing length of term**

Because each constituent PTA establishes its terms of office for serving as an officer or committee chair/member, the bylaws should define the length of terms. Speaking about National PTA's nominating and leadership development committee, Gatton said, "This committee will have three-year turns when in place. That gives members an opportunity to look at leaders over time, to see behavior and determine the skills and leadership that are missing. Then we can find people with those qualities."

Clark commented that another benefit of a yearlong nominating committee, regardless of the term limitation, is that members have the time to get to know one another



## Identifying potential leaders

The primary role of the nominating committee is to identify potential leaders for PTA vacancies. When seeking nominations for committee members and officers, check with your state PTA for a packet of information containing committee/job descriptions that can be adapted for your use. (This also applies for your PTA's search for nominating committee members.) PTA members who are elected to serve a position should be knowledgeable about the PTA and the qualifications for each committee or office.

**Sample Potential Leader Referral Form**

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Submitted by \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Evening phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Check one:**  
 I am referring myself for the position of \_\_\_\_\_  
 I am referring \_\_\_\_\_  
[person's name] for the position of \_\_\_\_\_

**His or her contact information:**  
Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Evening phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you nominating this individual for the position?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What leadership qualities do you see in this person?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Further comments/remarks:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Please return to [nominating committee chair].*

"Most units I'm familiar with have a self-nomination form for people to say what their skills are and interests are," Gatton said. She explained that National PTA's nominating and leadership development committee uses referral forms because committee members at the national level don't have the opportunity to know all PTA members like committees at the local level do.

While attending multi-state conferences, National Council of States meetings, and National PTA Board of Directors meetings, National PTA's nominating and leadership development committee distributes its leader-referral forms

and talks about what it takes to be a leader. Other PTAs could opt for a similar referral form to be distributed to members when the committee reports out during PTA meetings.

"Asking for qualifications is truly critical," Igo affirmed. "Ask people if they want to serve and what they feel qualified to do. For some, self-nominating is hard; a referral form gives all members a chance."

Forms also enable the nominating committee to identify people who are leaders or potential leaders, and assess their skills. "Bring forward the best-qualified persons," Igo asserted. "Make sure the person is best qualified for each particular position."

When looking for skills, Igo also said the nominating committee should look for diversity. "I don't mean just age, socioeconomic background, gender, race. I mean diversity in the broadest sense," Igo clarified. "Look for parents, teachers....Your PTA leadership should represent not only membership but the population of your school."



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### **Food for thought**

While there are always board vacancies during the year, Clark said many PTAs are reluctant to take someone off the board. "Most would rather have a nonperformer than a vacancy," Clark said. "That can be more harmful for morale." A year-round nominating committee could help ensure the process of filling vacancies is handled expeditiously with individuals possessing leadership skills and the desire to serve in a leadership capacity.

Clark asks leaders to make it a priority to look for possible successors. "The first role of an officer or committee chair is to replace yourself," stated Clark. "Always look to train. Withholding knowledge isn't power. If you're not sharing leadership information, your successor will be left holding the bag."

When there is a nominating committee, there's a perception among members that things are being handled better, according to Clark. "If you have a nominating committee looking at the progress of the organization, goals, leadership, etc., it can determine where the successes are and assess what's needed," Igo said.

National PTA

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