“Son, if you get stopped by the police, place your hands on the dashboard, have your driver’s license ready, and ask permission for any movements you may need to take.”

Many families that I know, including myself as an African American parent, had to answer the question above or have that conversation with their children. Many of you have heard me talk about my son Elijah or have seen him at a Summer Leadership Conference in the past. He is a quiet, intelligent, tall and a wonderfully handsome “Hershey Chocolate” young man. It pains me to say, that I had to have that “driving while Black conversation” with my son.

Even worse, as early as when he was six years old, I had to begin to have conversations about the racism he would most likely face in this world. We talked about what it looks, sounds and feels like. However, we all come from diverse communities, work places and associations. It often can feel like asking for racial equality in education, equity in resources that sustain our schools, and diversifying school staff may be too much.

But Why? In a state that some see as diverse and that may be enough to give us the false sense that all is well when it is not. We have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable not just in our schools but also in our very own homes and within our families.

Just as Black and Brown parents engage in conversations about race with our children when they are at a very young age, there is a need for White parents to engage in courageous conversations about race as well. When we as a collective teach and educate our children not just about race but the beauty and the contributions of different cultures, and the history of another race’s pain and their disparate treatment, we open the door to a world of understanding and appreciation for our neighbors.

Now more than ever it is time that the accountability of making our schools, neighborhoods, our companies, and playgrounds places that reflect the full spectrum of diversity. This my fellow moms, dads, grandparents, teachers, and all those that support the growth and development to not just embrace diversity but to be an active participant to helping our most precious children learn what it is to see color and to appreciate it. The earlier families begin to talk about race, the brighter of a future we will ensure that all our children will have here on this earth together. We can no longer afford vacationing in fear but we can surely step out on our will to build a better human race.

Please find resources that can start you on the path of having these courageous conversations, which will have an impact in your home and in this world (resources listed on page 7).
Appreciating the Little Things in Life
By Lorey A. Zaman, NYS PTA President

Appreciating the little things or making time for my family and myself is something I never seemed to have much time to do, but that has significantly changed over the last three months. So much about our everyday life has changed so drastically. Not a moment goes by that I do not hear about something that has invoked stress and worry. I thought it may be nice to share my silver lining.

Working remotely has afforded me the ability to be home with my family. We eat every meal together and watch a movie every night. We have time now to converse about anything and everything. Gosh I love my kids, and forgot how much I loved cooking for them and sitting down together to just hang out. We have played games and spent countless hours in the pool on weekends. I look at my now 10 year old son and think about how fun he is to be around. We have time to play, and we are both enjoying that! I look at my 19 year old daughter and realize what a bright, kind, beautiful young woman she is. We have time to talk about big girl stuff now. Even though my other two children are grown and on their own now, I am happy to say that through all this I have been able to spend some quality time with at least my oldest daughter. It helps that she is not that far away. I realized how much I missed her. My older son is clear across the country, but we have at least made more time to touch base electronically.

I have also taken this time to focus on me. I work out virtually everyday, and I make sure no matter how busy I am with work or PTA, I find 30 minutes to complete my class. Earlier this week it was not until 11:15 pm, but that did not stop me! It is amazing how much exercise helps alleviate stress. Exercising daily has also made me more conscious of my nutrition. I am totally focused on a lifestyle change, no deprivation. I feel great and look better.

And last but not least, taking time for actual date night and ‘visit time’ with the love of my life. What an awesome concept and so much fun! I have always loved life, and being Italian, socializing ranks way up there on top. What these last three months have shown me is that I did not seem to make enough time to socialize with those that are at the core of my existence—me and my kids. Realizing this and making that shift is the most important piece of my new normal.

"Worrying doesn't take away tomorrow's troubles, it takes away today's peace." I challenge you to look for your silver lining...there is one to be found in every cloud.

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day, and I make sure no matter how busy I am with work or PTA, I find 30 minutes to complete my class. Earlier this week it was not until 11:15 pm, but that did not stop me! It is amazing how much exercise helps alleviate stress. Exercising daily has also made me more conscious of my nutrition. I am totally focused on a lifestyle change, no deprivation. I feel great and look better.

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"Worrying doesn't take away tomorrow's troubles, it takes away today's peace." I challenge you to look for your silver lining...there is one to be found in every cloud.
Inspiration and change can come in many forms. To create lasting change in the times we are in, the children of NYS and PTA need you now more than ever.

My name is Mary Sotomayor, and I am the new NYS PTA Membership Coordinator. Together with our dedicated membership team, we hope to bring you real-time knowledge and resources that will make your membership successful.

Knowledge is half the power, with the challenges our state faces we all need a seat at the table. The only way to get in the room where decisions happen is through membership. We are asking all of our members to consider renewing your PTA membership today!

NYS PTA's power is in its number. Join and be counted!

Search to JOIN PTA: [http://nyspta.freesidesystems.net/](http://nyspta.freesidesystems.net/)
Adding New Officers

Review list of Site Administrators

Make sure all state dues are paid

Transfer MPA/WePay Account Ownership

Clear Hub Activity

Remove Families Who are Leaving the School

Add New Officers – You should do this as soon as your elections take place for 2020-2021 Officers. This replaces the “Form A” previously required by NYS PTA. This needs to be done even if the same people are staying in office for a second term.

Review list of Site Administrators – Take a periodic look at who are Site Admins and remove those that are no longer in positions that warrant this level of access. Typical people who need Site Admin access are current PTA Officers as well as Membership Chairs. Remember, you can always have other people as Hub Admins (in charge of individual hubs/groups on your site).

Make sure that all state dues are paid – Assuming that your MH Store is setup, people can purchase dues at any time, so make sure that you’re current on your state dues. Any unpaid dues will show up in a yellow box on the State Payments screen. Only current year dues can be paid via the online eCheck/ACH, so it must be done by June 30th.

Transfer MPA/WePay Account Ownership – This needs to happen even if the email address is remaining the same. The Account Owner and KYC Name should match and be a current signor on the bank account. Don’t forget to change the password! When doing this process, please be sure to watch for emails from WePay and follow the prompts/update ASAP – not providing timely info will cause your WePay account and MH Store to be disabled!

Clear Hub Activity – It’s especially important to clear out hub activity if you have classroom hubs setup. Removing class parent members, old messages and photos of students should be a priority. Make sure that signup responses are removed and signups archived for use next year. Before removing hub members, make sure that you manually add them to any grade-level hubs (upper level) prior to removing them from the lower branch hub. Then you can rename grade-level hubs for the next school year. If you are interested in doing this, please contact me at director@gvpta.org so I can guide you through how to do it correctly. The alternative is to clear everyone from all hubs then have parents join the hubs that pertain to them in the fall. Removing people from hubs does not remove them from your site. Clearing classroom hubs are probably best done by either the teacher themselves or room parent, in case they want to save anything prior to it being deleted. Cleared data cannot be recovered!!

Remove Families Who are Leaving the School – Schools typically have at least 1 group of people who matriculate out of the building. It might be 5th or 6th graders for elementary buildings, or 12th graders for central or high school units. The best way to do this is to proactively send out communication to everyone on your site encouraging them to let you know if they are not returning to the school next fall. I typically ask them to reply back with REMOVE in the subject line. Then you can search the People tab on your site, select those people and choose “Remove from Org” under the People Actions.

Taking these deliberate steps to “clean up” your MemberHub site over the summer will allow you to continue to communicate with relevant people and keep your site clean for all of the wonderful work that you will do next year!

Click to find extensive instructions and instructions how to do all of the above.
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1, Courageous Conversation

Links:

Books:
- https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/g32743703/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-racism-books/
- https://www.mothermag.com/black-history-movies-for-kids/
- http://www.victoriannephoenix.com/

TV/radio shows:
- https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2020/06/05/stream-these-20-compelling-movies-tv-shows-racism-america/3135829001/
- https://www.npr.org/2020/05/31/866426170/raising-white-kids-author-on-how-white-parents-can-talk-about-race

Videos:
- https://www.edutopia.org/article/teaching-black-history-culturally-responsive-ways
- https://www.ted.com/playlists/250/talks_to_help_you_understand_r

Articles/Websites/Organizations:
- https://janeelliott.com/
- https://www.apa.org/res/parent-resources/

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Dorinda & Life 360 Member

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Accepting the Challenge Before Us
By Candy Ditkowski, Western Region Director

When all of our communities across this state began the process of NY-PAUSE, NYS PTA was already looking into how this would affect the work of PTA, which we know, still continues on even when our school buildings are physically closed. The great news is that we do carry on, and we do it well! The challenge in front of us as PTA members is reiterated in our president’s motto, “Garner the past. Change Today. Embrace Tomorrow.” We know from 123 years of PTA that our mission is always relevant, despite any current circumstances, and we’ve been given the opportunity to adjust, adapt, and to keep moving forward. The guidance that was provided to units, councils, and regions through the State PTA website has helped to open the way forward through unexpected changes.

The Western Region Reflections Chair immediately recognized the impact that the closure of our schools and meeting venues would have on our upcoming Reflections Celebration. We adjusted our plans and adapted to create a ceremony that would recognize and honor these students via YouTube. Our region’s nominating committee also jumped right into their job, and they were able to move forward, meeting virtually, and securing a slate of nominees in time for notification prior to our Spring Conference and annual meeting.

Admittedly, the bigger challenge our region faced was moving forward with our region’s annual meeting. Units/councils/regions have all been given the option to delay our nominations and election meetings, and should make that decision if that is what will work best for your group. Having made the decision to move forward, however, Western Region had to look at how we might adapt our annual meeting to be held in a virtual setting, yet still provide the value and relevance for those who would be attending from the local units and councils.

Takeaway note: Make sure your virtual meeting is necessary and relevant to those who take the time to attend. Our own region event is typically a full evening event. However, during this time when our computers and Zoom accounts are working overtime with student-teacher meetings, and adults are working virtually from home, adding one more ho-hum meeting wasn’t going to cut it. The original plan for our full event was to highlight the Reflections program throughout our entire Spring Conference. With our virtual setting, however, we chose instead to take a brief opportunity to recognize the program as a whole, making sure that attendees knew this was an important piece of the work our region does every year.

Our meeting format and voting procedure were adapted to fit our virtual format, from the very first steps with the delegate’s registration and extending them voting privileges, to our actual ballot voting process. Per the guidance extended, we planned and prepared for a ballot election that would provide voter confidentiality and still allow our delegates the right to exercise their vote through a ballot system if needed. If your own unit or council would like some assistance with this process, we would be happy to share the specifics of our process in detail - feel free to email info@westernregionpta.org.

It’s always important to plan properly, but remember that sometimes, even with forethought, there can still be unexpected glitches. Despite best intentions, planning, and practice with my computer set-up, I found myself having to host our annual meeting while sitting on the floor in front of my sofa, computer on my lap, having to stay in close proximity to my router due to a poor signal that is normally effortless. “Best laid plans” and all - be prepared with a back-up.

My own district superintendent recently shared these words, “Change is constant. The variable is how well we adapt to change. If we truly live our vision, mission and core values, we will continue to adapt effectively to the circumstances with which we are presented, and grow as a result.” These words ring so true to us. Even if we find ourselves needing to continue with online meetings and video conferences as the best way to communicate, I am thankful we have these options available to us as we keep moving forward, and as we continue to strengthen our PTA.
“We’re able to notify parents and provide them with concise PDF reports so that they know what their students are doing in school.”

- Gary Lambert
  Director of 21st Century Learning, Beekmantown Central School District

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**GoGuardian Parent App**
Provide parents with easy access to their students’ online activity.
V. E. Wightman PTA in South Central Region celebrated National Children’s Dental Health Month by partnering with local dental professionals to prepare dental hygiene kits. Donations from the dental community were used by PTA volunteers to assemble and distribute 544 dental hygiene kits. Smiles all around for doubling their NYS PTA membership goal!

Lift up was the goal of the Roxbury Central PTSA in Southeastern Region to show their support of their staff during the shutdown. Taking a cue from their Rocket mascot, they used donations from their local CVS to make Rocket Boosters (treat filled thank you bags) as an appreciation of the efforts of their essential employees. Another boost—they increased their membership by 60% over their NYS PTA membership goal!

In Taconic Region, F. D. Roosevelt High School PTSA hosted The Council on Addiction Prevention and Education (CAPE) for an informative and interactive presentation, Teen Vaping: Get the Facts. This timely topic was open to all parents and staff in the district. Congratulations on meeting our mission and meeting their NYS PTA membership goal!

For information about the benefits of becoming a PTA unit, contact Outreach Coordinator Kim Blasiak at outreach@nyspta.org.

We are PTA and now they are too!
Welcome to our newly chartered units:
North Babylon SEPTA (Suffolk)
Corning Painted Post SEPTA (South Central)
Hamilton PTA (Westchester-East Putnam)
Hello, How Are You?
By Sarah Henris, Legislation Coordinator

Social Distancing, Face Masks, & PTA Advocacy
How is a PTA supposed to advocate for children when social distancing rules and quarantining make us feel far, far away from the decision-making table. How do we work outside of the COVID-19 rules box and ensure every child has access to a quality education while meeting their basic needs?

The answer is simple… intentionally connect and check in on one another.

Families
This pandemic is forcing us to rethink how we can communicate effectively with the families in our districts. Find ways to truly reach everyone. Perhaps email works for most people, but during this crisis, we may need to do more. Be creative and confident that you have reached all families. Set up phone chains or visits (maintaining safe distancing), translate documents and be sure to genuinely ask “How are you?”

School
No one truly knows what the future will bring for us in September, yet. But as PTA leaders, we can work closely with the school to ensure the needs and concerns of the children and their families are being addressed. Get yourself a seat at the table; join in discussions and virtual meetings to find ways in which your school can safely open. Be sure to tell them how your families are doing and don’t forget to ask the school staff, “How are you doing?”

Community
PTA is poised perfectly to bring families and community resources together, especially during this pandemic. Not only can PTA leaders speak with legislators and other decision makers on behalf of families, but we can readily share news about community services and events with our members.

Our attitude and effort in addressing the “things” we encounter along our life’s path will be our guide. Now is the perfect time to make new connections or strengthen old bonds with your local police & fire departments, local legislators, mayors, town boards, food banks, religious leaders, rehabilitation centers, social and emotional service providers, doctors, dentists, hospitals, libraries, museum curators, park rangers, etc., the list is endless.

Hello, How are you?
Four small words that, when spoken from a place of genuine caring, just may make the world of difference in someone’s life.

Did you know you can download fun materials about transportation safety anytime?

Check out: https://nyspta.org/home/programs/everychild-travelssafely/
As New York State families eagerly welcome varying stages of reopening, certain restrictions continue to define the “new normal” in the coming weeks, if not months.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, adults have faced unprecedented challenges while continuing to take on the responsibilities of sustaining the family’s economic stability, physical wellness, and educational needs, among others. Children have had to adapt to school closings and long term social isolation from friends and family members. Adapting to major lifestyle changes while managing the fear for ourselves and others of contracting the virus can be mentally tasking to adults and children.

In light of these newfound challenges, experts in the fields of public health and psychology have released recommendations and methods for alleviating stress and anxiety experienced in relation to the pandemic. As with any trying event that a family may face, maintaining open and honest, age-appropriate channels of communication is key to healthy coping. In addition, children rely on parent figures for their emotional cues and feelings of safety and security. Therefore, equally important is adults’ self-care and willingness to address their own worry in order to create a calm and supportive environment for all.

The links below contain tips and tools that you may find helpful as we all navigate ongoing and new challenges our families are faced with:

- [https://akidsbookabout.com/pages/covid-19](https://akidsbookabout.com/pages/covid-19)
- [https://www.mindheart.co/descargables](https://www.mindheart.co/descargables)
- [https://www.who.int/news-room/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-Coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---mental-health?gclid=EAIaIQobChMlxXMxZnl6QIVA4vICh2AoA0YEAAYASAAEgIsX_D_BwE](https://www.who.int/news-room/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-Coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---mental-health?gclid=EAIaIQobChMlxXMxZnl6QIVA4vICh2AoA0YEAAYASAAEgIsX_D_BwE)
The distance learning experience is different for everyone. Some children are thriving, while others are struggling. Children with Special Needs, with their varied and unique learning needs, are especially vulnerable. As parents and caregivers, it is incredibly frustrating to watch our children regress or lose confidence. With three school-aged children of my own, all with different needs, I’ve had my share of the difficult days - but there have also been some good ones. I’d love to know how you are managing this situation in your household, please email me at specialeducation@nyspta.org to share what has worked for your family.

I have found that having a plan helps me when I feel especially disoriented. In the midst of the unknown, here are five constructive ways to take back some control:

**Document Everything!** - Log every call to or from a teacher or service provider, each telehealth session, and save all correspondence. Keep a record of every homework meltdown, every successful Zoom class, tracking what has worked and what hasn’t. Make note of any regression (loss of previously attained skills) or concerning behaviors, and if they have escalated. Ask the teachers if there is something they feel would be helpful. During the summer months and as we transition back into classroom learning, some of the services and supports your child is receiving may need to be adjusted. The more concrete data you have, the better you can successfully advocate for them.

**Mental Wellness** - The whole family is affected by this situation, not just the children. This guide is a valuable resource to support your family: Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Engaging in fun family activity that is appropriate for all family members - an interactive game, a movie or an art project - is a low-pressure way to enjoy some time together and let off some steam. Don’t be afraid to modify activities or games to suit your family, so that children with varying abilities, sensory issues, and frustration tolerances can all participate. For example, if attention is an issue, try breaking a movie into several parts and watching it over multiple days.

**Give Yourself A Break** - You’ve got this! You are making a positive difference in your child’s life. You’ve been thrown into a situation that you were not expecting, and are doing your very best. While you are advocating for your child, be sure to advocate for yourself as well, make self-care a priority. Time is a luxury many of us don’t have, but try to find a few moments to recharge: take a walk, have a sweet treat, watch the sunset, color, read, journal, enjoy mindless TV - whatever works for you.

**Interview Your Children** - I find I get the most interesting points of view from my children. Siblings observe each other’s behaviors regularly and are quick to note differences. I may not realize what exactly my son is struggling with when he is feeling really upset and sometimes that leads to my own frustration. Waiting for a few moments of calm, and speaking with each child privately has opened my eyes. It also gives each child a bit of dedicated alone-time, which is extra-special while we are all social distancing together. For those of us who enjoy journaling, some of these observations may make for interesting - and amusing - reading when we look back on this time.

**Ask for help** - Reach out to your healthcare providers for specific information and guidance regarding any medical or emotional needs. If you are overwhelmed right now, the NYS COVID-19 Emotional Support Line is staffed by specially trained volunteers who can help - 1-844-863-9314. In non-emergent situations, the NYS PTA website is a fantastic resource for your family: COVID-19 Resources - We are here to help.
As I work from home, I reflect on how different life is today. New York State is reopening Region by Region, one phase at a time, and as I look to the future I ponder the reopening of schools and the advocacy that may reimagine, revamp, and revolutionize education. Parents, families, educators, school district staff, and communities will strive to create a healthy and safe school setting ensuring students’ emotional and academic development. Will you be part of the conversation? Perhaps you will find yourself advocating for public school funding or safe and nurturing environments or parent and family engagement.

NYS PTA Legislative Priorities is an extremely useful document that you or your unit can use as a guide or platform.

Where We Stand is an extremely useful NYS PTA document that encompasses a basis for action. Where We Stand is the official position document of NYS PTA and is comprised of resolution statements adopted by Convention delegates. These statements are intended to guide members as to what action to take on specific issues that affect the education, health and welfare of children and youth.

Maybe your unit will want to write a Resolution for your school district, region, or even NYS PTA. The Advocacy section of the NYS PTA Resource Guide, along with Region PTA and NYS PTA will provide the guidance needed.

Are you thinking that this is the perfect time to start writing a resolution to be submitted to NYS PTA for consideration and hopefully inclusion in Where We Stand? Anytime is the perfect time to begin, and NYS PTA can assist you in your endeavor. First, identify & research your issue, then draft & format your text, & finally, submit your resolution including a narrative summary & background documentation. Unfortunately, the deadline has already past for consideration at Convention 2020, but the due date for consideration at the 125th Convention in 2021 is April 1, 2021.

Check out: Workshop Presentation: Don’t Be Scared, Be Prepared to Write a Resolution.
Virtual Summer Training

August 1, 2020

Join NYS PTA for a FREE Virtual Summer Training Camp, to include:

MENTAL HEALTH PRESENTATION
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Treasury, Advocacy, and Field Service for Units and Regions

Pre-registration will be required. Registration and more details coming soon!

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