A Walk Through PTA History
The PTA Story

PTA’s mission is the same today as it was more than 100 years ago—to better the lives of all children.
The Founding 1897

The founders had a dream to change the minds of parents, the public, and the government in order to improve the lives of children.

Alice McLellan Birney, a teacher and widow with two children

Phoebe Apperson Hearst (mother of publishing giant William Randolph Hearst)
The Founding 1897

• The first meeting of the National Congress of Mothers was held in Washington, DC on February 17, 1897

• News spread of this new Congress and cause — and their voices were soon heard all across the country
The Early Years

At its founding, the organization showed concern with health issues and sanitation conditions for infants and youth.

National PTA supported early childhood education and fought for the establishment of Kindergarten as part of the public school system.
The early years were spent chartering state organizations and building a network throughout the nation of mothers who believed in the cause.
Selena Sloan Butler, founder of the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers

One woman who took up the parent-teacher cause in the 1920s was African-American teacher and child advocate Selena Sloan Butler.
Selena Sloan Butler

• She attended PTA conferences and in 1926 founded the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers in states where segregation was legally sanctioned.

• From the onset, the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers admitted into its ranks all who cared to work for the “betterment of child life.”

• We recognize and honor Selena Sloan Butler as one of PTA’s founders today.
Reflections

In 1969, Mary Lou Anderson, then Colorado PTA President, created the arts achievement and education program called Reflections.

Today, more than half a million students participate in Reflections each year.
Education Reform 1950s

- In response to the Soviets’ launching of Sputnik in 1957, the U.S. education focus changed to emphasize math and science in all grade levels.

Hot Lunch Program 1946

- One of the brightest spots of this era was PTA advocating for the establishment of a Federally-Funded School Lunch Program.

1960s

- All PTA units encouraged to educate children and youth on the health hazards of cigarette smoking.
- PTA seeks to inspire young people to become the nation’s first smokeless generation.

Anti-smoking Campaign 1964

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Unification 1970

- National PTA and the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers formally merged on June 22, 1970.
- And so did their identical missions—to improve the lives of all children.
Child Safety

- From seat belts to bike helmets, PTA has always called for the highest standards of safety for children.
- With the help of corporate sponsors, PTA produces and distributes bike safety and bus safety information and PSAs.

Parent Involvement

- Parent involvement becomes buzzword of the education community.
- PTA hosts Parent Involvement Summit where 28 education organizations meet to discuss what each can do to encourage greater parent involvement.
Hispanic Initiative

• PTA steps up translation efforts on more parenting resources than ever before, including national advertising and its website.
• PTA also launches Hispanic Initiative in three pilot states to identify and mentor Hispanic leaders within the organization.
• National PTA and The Ad Council launch national Public Service Announcements in English and Spanish to increase awareness of the need and benefits of parent involvement.
A Walk Through PTA History - 2000 and beyond

During this decade, PTA also responded to national tragedy and disaster—first to September 11 and then to Hurricane Katrina.