



NEW YORK

PARENT TEACHER

**END OF
SCHOOL
2026**

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Beyond Measure, My PTA Why

By Patricia Frazier, NYS PTA President

The feeling does not go away. Long after my children have finished their school years, I still begin the mind shift in mid-June from the Monday to Friday set schedule to the preparation for the busy but in an easy going way summer days.

This year, I am also shifting towards the completion of my term as NYS PTA president. Looking back not only on the last two years but the past thirty as a PTA volunteer and leader, I can't help but think about what we like to call our "PTA Why".

One of my earliest answers came when the graduating high school seniors returned to speak to our elementary students preparing for the move up to middle school. As they shared their memories from fun nights to field trips, each one was somehow connected to the work of our PTA.

Running the first Pick A Reading Partner program at our middle school with a Rock n Roll theme with amazing participation that ended with a dance party with an Elvis impersonator confirmed the value of PARP.

When a member pitched an idea for sponsoring a community rummage sale that was met with less than enthusiastic response we gave them the go ahead anyway and it turned into a favorite annual event.

Celebrating our Reflections participants and bringing the band of high school students led by a Reflections award winner to

perform at the state convention led to dancing and the surprise playing of one of the president's favorite songs.

Working with my region leaders in 2013 to create a 30-point checklist (now 31 points with the addition of Financial Accountability Training) as an organizational tool for our units to use and that continues to be shared widely through state trainings. Note- The original document name was the 30-Point Inspection because the theme, and I do love a theme, of the region summer training event was "taking a PTA road trip".

Successfully advocating with other stakeholders for universal school meals to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students, statewide in New York, was an incredible win! (One that is even greater than a Buffalo Bills Superbowl win will be.) Beginning in the 25-26 school year, this program ensures 2.7 million students are fed daily. It eliminates meal stigma, improves academic performance, and saves families an average of \$165 per child each month. The impact of NYS PTA in this effort was immeasurable and

checked the "PTA Why" box for all!

And most recently, in speaking with a unit president who had completed her term and while unforeseen circumstances made it a difficult year, she shared that what she learned gave her the confidence to apply for an executive position outside of her usual skill set.

No matter my role, my PTA Why will continue because the mission still calls!



Please join me in thanking our Executive Director Kyle McCauley Belokopitsky who joined us in 2016 as our first full-time Executive Director. She has brought energy, sustainability and knowledge to our association at every level. She leaves us to take on a new role, one that still supports our children and their education. Read her story on page 4.

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Scheduling now = one less thing to worry about in the fall.



Representing New York at National PTA Convention

The National PTA annual convention brought us “Together Again” for the first time since 2022 with the theme “PTA Lights the Way for Every Child”. What an amazing National PTA adventure as our 27 delegates travelled from 9 of our 12 regions to Pittsburgh, PA!

Workshops, speakers, exhibitors and displays filled the agenda that was shortened by a day from the past so delegates could be home to celebrate Father’s Day. We were PTA proud of the workshop presenters from NYS PTA- Immediate Past President Amany Messieha Dgheim (National PTA resolutions), Legislation Coordinator Susan Fisher (youth), Special Education Specialist Lissa Zukoff (inclusive advocacy), Treasurer Sonya Verrillo (podcasting), and Past President Dana Platin (better board meetings). Vice President Rob Rijos was a friendly face at the Nominating and Leadership Recruitment Committee table.

During the general sessions, we shared our gratitude to outgoing President Yvonne Johnson and welcomed incoming President Bill Datema. Past President Dana Platin was elected to a second term on the Board of Directors. Encouraging words came from keynote speakers, Al Roker and 2026 National Teacher of the Year Leon Smith. NYS Pride PTSA was featured in a video clip as we recognized Pride Month. Networking and pin trading continued throughout with our “We PTA for All Kids” pin designed by Treasurer Sonya Verrillo being in high demand!

We are looking forward to June 17-20, 2027 for the National PTA Convention in Grapevine, Texas.



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Where the Road Takes You

By Kyle Belokopitsky, NYS PTA Executive Director, for the last time

In 2016, the Chicago Cubs won the World Series ending their 108-year curse, the Paris Climate Agreement was signed, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, Pokémon Go was released, and I started at NYS PTA (I know, it seems a bit anticlimactic after that list!).

Little did I know that the road that brought me to NYS PTA would lead to the most professionally and personal transformational experience of my life. With all its twists and turns, road blocks and fast lanes. 10 years ago, I didn't understand what "every child, one voice" meant, I didn't get what "making every child's potential a reality" was. See, I didn't know in 2016 what PTA would end up meaning to me. It became more than just a "road taken." More than "just 3 letters." More than "just a job." NYS PTA has become my life.

For the last 10 years, I have had the honor and privilege of serving as your Executive Director. Each and every day, I have had an opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child. I really believe that. And that was a responsibility I did not take lightly. I truly believe that public education can lift families out of poverty, that we can support every child where they are, no matter their race, ethnicity, zip code, income, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, immigration status, or abilities, and that PTA can help ALL children achieve their dreams.

We have done some amazing things as we travelled this road together for the last 10 years. We

have made NYS PTA absolutely fiscally sustainable. We have exponentially increased NYS PTA programs and services for students, educators, members, and units. We have supported units and leaders in new and exciting ways. We have allowed NYS PTA staff and Governance Team to grow together. We have chartered the first in the country Pride PTSA. We have supported diversity, equity and inclusion, family engagement, immigrant students and families, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities. We have fought the hardest advocacy fights, and won the best wins. Universal School Meals, maximum heat in classrooms, eliminating lead in water in schools, fully funding Foundation Aid, mandating mental health education for all students and teaching all 10th graders Youth Mental Health First Aid, supporting students with dyslexia and dysgraphia, pausing the electric school bus mandate, meaningful diploma options for ALL students including students with disabilities, expanding Universal Pre-K, supporting expansions in higher education, BOCES and STEM, reconnected students in the classroom, protected youth online, and just so much more.

And in these past 10 years, I have realized that PTA is well more than just advocacy wins, or amazing programs and services. PTA is more than just 3 letters. PTA is REALLY our 225,000 members in our schools and communities in NYS. Our 2.5 million PTA members across our country. Our

2.6 million NYS school children, and their educators and families. Our more than 50 governance team members. Our incredible board of directors. My amazing Executive Committee. And all of the remarkable Presidents and Past Presidents I have had the incredible honor to work hand in hand with. And my 4 sisters in our office. See, as we travelled this road together, PTA has become my family. Riding in that big station wagon, heading on some amazing adventures together.

In August, I will be honored to re-join the team at NYS United Teachers, as their new Director of Legislation, under the wonderful leadership of my friend and colleague President Melinda Person. It is an incredible opportunity to continue to support our amazing 2.6 million school children, their educators, school staff and leaders, and families. I am lucky that I am not travelling far, but travelling down the road nonetheless.

10 years ago this month, in June 2016, I decided to travel down the road from NYSUT, and join NYS PTA. Robert Frost offered, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - I took the one less travelled by, and that made all the difference."

I hope I have made you proud. I hope I have made a difference. And I hope that our roads will cross again.

And in true Kyle fashion, I leave you with my favorite Dr. Seuss quote, "Unless someone like you, cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

Summer Food Resources

A Toolkit for Schools and Community Organizations



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When the school year ends, kids lose access to free school meals. If your family could use extra support over the summer, the following resources are available in our community:

SUMMER MEALS

During the summer, all kids and teens ages 18 and under can get free meals at nearby parks, community centers, libraries, and other locations. Many sites offer fun activities, and in rural areas, some locations offer grab-and-go meals. Starting in early July, you can find summer meal locations near you by visiting [SummerMealsNY.org](https://www.summermealsny.org).

SUMMER EBT

[Summer EBT](https://www.summerebt.org) helps families with school-aged children buy groceries when school is out. Eligible children receive a \$120 food benefit on an EBT card that can be used at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other retailers. Many children are automatically enrolled, but some will have to apply.

- Children automatically enrolled will receive a letter from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (NYSOTDA) with the date their benefits will be issued and the payment method. Families may also receive email and text message communication from NYSOTDA about their benefits.
- If your child is eligible but you have not received any communication from

NYSOTDA by mid-June, [apply](https://www.summermealsny.org) by September 8, 2026.

- For more information, visit otda.ny.gov/programs/summer-ebt

SNAP

SNAP provides monthly benefits to buy food at grocery stores and farmers' markets. To see if your family may be eligible, visit [SNAPHelpNY.org](https://www.snaphelpny.org) or text SNAPNY to 844-366-3435 and answer a few questions. In less than five minutes, you will learn if you may be eligible and how to apply. Free and confidential assistance is available to help you complete and submit your SNAP application.

WIC

If you are pregnant or raising kids under age five, WIC offers healthy food, nutrition and breastfeeding support, and other resources for your family. You may qualify if your [income meets program limits](https://www.wicny.org) or if you participate in Medicaid, SNAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, the Essential Plan, or TANF. Recent updates to the program, including virtual appointments and expanded

food options, make it easier than ever to participate. Chat with Wanda, WIC's bilingual virtual assistant, at [WICHelpNY.org](https://www.wichelpny.org) to get connected with a WIC office.

FOOD PANTRIES & OTHER RESOURCES

Find emergency food providers:

- [The Food Pantries Food Connect Map](https://www.foodpantriesconnect.org): Find local food pantries, community meals, mobile food resources, and more.
- [Feeding NYS Food Pantry Locator](https://www.feedingnys.org): Find food pantries, soup kitchens, and other food assistance resources near you.

Find food resources by phone:

- Call the USDA National Hunger Hotline at 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (Spanish)
- Call 211 for New York State residents, or 311 in New York City
- Text "food" to 914-342-7744

**When School is Out,
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Learn more at
FoodHelpNY.org

Case Study:

TURNING INTENTION INTO ACTION

Engaging Men in Our PTA Communities



By Charles Jean-Louis, Male Engagement Specialist

As the Male Engagement Specialist for the New York State PTA, I often hear the same question from PTA units across the state:

“How do we get more fathers and male role models involved?”

The answer is not complicated, but it is intentional.

Before serving at the state level, I had the privilege of leading male engagement efforts at Brookside Elementary School in Baldwin, NY. What began as a simple goal, in getting more men visible and active in our school community, evolved into a model that increased PTA membership, strengthened community bonds, and, most importantly, changed how students experienced male presence in their school lives.

This is a case study in what works.

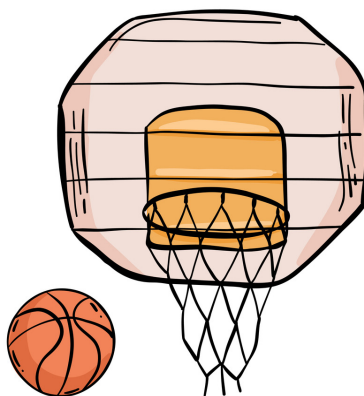
Start with an Invitation that Matches Their Strengths

One of the most important lessons we learned is this:

Men are more likely to engage when they are invited to do, not just to attend.

Rather than asking fathers to come to meetings, we created

events that aligned with their interests, skills, and comfort zones.



Semi-Annual 3-on-3 Male Role Models Basketball Tournament

This became a signature event. Fathers, uncles, brothers, coaches, and mentors came together for a fun, visible activity with students cheering them on.

But there was one key requirement:

Every participant had to become a PTA member before stepping on the court.

We tied action to action. The result? Increased membership and a powerful public display of male involvement.

Basketball Skills Clinic (New Addition)

Building on the tournament's success, we recently hosted a

Basketball Skills Clinic where male role models didn't just play, they coached.

Men ran skill stations, mentored students, taught fundamentals, and encouraged teamwork. The shift from playing for the kids to working with the kids deepened relationships and demonstrated leadership, patience, and mentorship in action.

Students saw men as teachers, supporters, and guides, not just spectators.

Create a Communication Channel Just for Dads

We established the Brookside Dads Group Chat to keep fathers informed and engaged.

But it became more than reminders about events.

I asked every man in the group to share:

- What skills they have
- How they would like to contribute
- What support they might need from the community

This simple exercise created accountability, ownership, and brotherhood. Men began showing up not because they were asked, but because they felt needed.

Let Men Lead Visible Impact Efforts

FUNDrive for Donations

When we organized a school-wide donation drive, the men help to lead it. They participated in the coordination and lifted, sorted, and delivered.

It showed the school community something powerful:

Male engagement is not symbolic. It produces results.

Programs Any PTA Can Replicate

These efforts are not unique to one school. They are easily adaptable across districts:

- Literacy Nights – Male Role Model reading with students
- Skill-Sharing Workshops – Carpentry, cooking, tech, finance, art
- Community Service Challenges – Volunteering alongside students
- Sports & Wellness Events – Fun runs, fitness challenges, intramurals
- Leadership Pathways – Encouraging men to take PTA roles

What We Learned

1. Men engage when the invitation is purposeful.
2. Visibility matters. Students need to see male involvement.
3. Tie participation to PTA membership.
4. Give men ownership, not just attendance.
5. Build community among the men themselves.

The Cultural Shift

The greatest outcome was not higher event attendance.

It was hearing students say:

“My dad is coming to school today.”

It was teachers noticing more fathers volunteering.

It was men who had never stepped into the school now asking, “What’s next?”

Male involvement stopped being the exception. It became expected.

A Call to PTAs Across New York State

Male engagement does not require large budgets or complex planning. It requires intentional invitations, meaningful roles, and visible opportunities to contribute.

When fathers and male role models are welcomed into the life of the school in ways that match their strengths, they become powerful advocates for students, schools, and the PTA mission.

Let’s make male involvement not an occasional success story, but a standard practice across our communities.

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Start planning for Fall! Your PTA can help the children in your community travel more safely to and from school by hosting a Traffic Safety event! NYS PTA can provide educational materials, reflective give-aways, bicycle helmets, and more for your event.

Email Kim Blasiak, NYS PTA Programs / Events Associate for more information about the event at kblasiak@nyspta.org.

The Every Child Travels Safely initiative will focus on transportation safety and see that children and caregivers increase safety in all aspects of child travel. To learn more about Traffic Safety, [Click Here!](#)



WELLNESS MATTERS

Supporting the Whole Child This Summer

By the NYS PTA Wellness Team



As the school year wraps up, summer is a chance for families to rest, recharge and reset routines that support kids' health. The NYS PTA Wellness Team encourages families to focus on the whole child; physical health, mental health and a safe environment—because these areas work together to help children learn and thrive.

“Small, consistent routines—movement, meals, sleep and connection—can make a big difference for kids’ well-being all summer long.”

Below are practical, family-friendly ideas you can use right away— at home, in your neighborhood and on the go.

1) Keep Healthy Habits Simple

Summer schedules can shift, but a few basics go a long way:

- Build meals and snacks around fruits, vegetables, whole grains and protein when possible.
- Keep water available, especially during outdoor play and travel.
- Aim for daily movement: playground time, walking, biking, swimming or a family game in the yard.
- Use summer to schedule annual checkups, dental visits and any recommended preventive care.

2) Support Mental Health Through Connection

Less structure can be a relief, and it can also feel unsettling for some children. A few small habits can help kids feel secure:

- Make time for daily check-ins: a car ride conversation, a walk or bedtime talk.
- Listen first. Reflect what you hear (“It sounds like you felt left out...”) before jumping to solutions.
- Balance activities with downtime; quiet reading, art, journaling or simply resting.
- Keep a few anchors (regular sleep and wake times, mealtimes, a consistent bedtime routine).

3) Get Outside Safely and Care for the Spaces We Share

Outdoor time supports physical health and can reduce stress. Keep wellness in mind while you explore:

- Practice sun safety (shade, protective clothing and sunscreen as appropriate for your family).
- Plan for heat: bring water, take breaks and choose cooler times of day for active play.
- Model environmental responsibility: recycle, reduce single-use plastics and

conserve water.

- Leave outdoor spaces better than you found them—pack out trash and respect local wildlife.

Looking Ahead to Back-to-School Wellness

As we prepare for the new school year, the NYS PTA Wellness Team will continue advocating for policies, resources and practices that support the whole child—healthy bodies, healthy minds and healthy learning environments.

Families, schools and communities all play a role. This summer, choose one or two realistic goals and build from there—progress is made in small steps.

Quick Summer Wellness Checklist

- Move:** 30–60 minutes of active play most days (break it into chunks).
- Fuel:** Offer fruits/veggies first; keep easy, healthy snacks within reach.
- Hydrate:** Water with meals and before/after outdoor time.
- Reset:** A consistent bedtime routine, even if bedtime shifts.
- Connect:** One “check-in” conversation each day.
- Protect:** Sun/heat safety plan for trips, sports and camps.



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The First Year After *the Last Checklist*

**What life looked like after the graduation,
the house grew quiet, and everything changed**

By Renee Daniels, Membership Coordinator

It has been a year since I sat at my kitchen table, staring at my iced coffee, scribbling what I thought would be my last End of Year Checklist.

I remember the way my pen hovered over the page when I realized what was coming next. Graduation. Goodbyes. The end of a chapter I had been living in for nearly two decades.

I still get choked up remembering it all. But what I didn't know then... was that the checklist wasn't the hard part.

The hard part came after.

After the parties were cleaned up.

After the decorations came down.

After the last game was played.

After the house got quiet.

After we packed up Jake's life into boxes and bins and somehow fit 18 years of "home" into them, we flew 1,200 miles south to Florida.

I held it together better than I thought I would.

Through the packing.

Through the unpacking.

Through the Target runs for dorm room extras we definitely didn't need but bought anyway.

Through making his bed, organizing his drawers, pretending

like this was all completely normal.

Even when we said goodbye in that parking lot.

I hugged him a little longer than usual. Okay... a lot longer.

I choked up a little, but I didn't fall apart.

Not there.

Not yet.

It wasn't until we got back home... walked into the house... and I saw his room.

That's when it hit.

Not like a wave.

Not even like a crash.

More like... a slow, heavy settling.

The kind that sits in your chest and doesn't move.

The house was clean. Too clean.

No random shoes by the door.

No last-minute "Can you wash this for me?"

No noise coming from down the hall.

Just quiet.

And for the first time in a really long time... I had nowhere I needed to be.

No list telling me what came next.

And that's when I realized something I wasn't prepared for:



I didn't know how to function without the list.

For weeks—maybe months, if I'm being honest—I floated.

I would wake up, make my coffee, sit at the table... and just stare.

Not in a sad, crying-all-day kind of way (although there were definitely days for that too)... but in a "what am I supposed to do with myself now?" kind of way.

I kept thinking I should be doing something.

But nothing felt urgent.

And without urgency... I felt a little lost.

I missed the chaos more than I ever thought I would.

I missed the texts.

The planning.
The feeling of being needed.
I even missed the baseball pants.
Yes... those white baseball pants. The ones that required a level of stain removal skill that should honestly count as a life certification. Growth is weird like that.

So I did what I've always done when I don't know what to do.

I made a list.

But this time... it looked very different.

At first, it was almost embarrassingly simple.

Get out of bed.

Take a shower.

Go for a walk.

Text someone.

Do one productive thing.

That was it.

No color coding.

No ten-step plans.

No squeezing in 47 tasks before noon.

Just... small things.

And some days, even that felt like a lot.

But slowly—very slowly—I started to find a rhythm.

Not the old rhythm. That one is gone.

But a new one.

One that didn't revolve around my boys, their school activities or sport schedules... but around how I actually wanted my day to feel.

Some days, I leaned into the quiet.

Other days, I avoided it completely.

I started saying yes to things I used to not have time for before.

Trying a new hobby.

Taking my time in a store.

Sitting outside with no agenda.

I also said no more easily.

Because for the first time in a long time... I could.

And somewhere in those first few months, something shifted.

The quiet stopped feeling so heavy.

It started to feel... peaceful.

Not all the time. Let's not get carried away.

There are still moments.

Like when I walk past his room.

Or see something at the store I know he would like.

Or when my phone doesn't buzz for hours and I realize just how much things have changed.

But those moments don't knock me over the way they used to.

They just... sit with me for a bit.

And then pass.

I still show up.

Just differently.

I'm still involved in PTA—because let's be honest, I don't think that part of me is ever going away. But I'm not running at the same pace. I'm not carrying the same weight.

I've learned that I don't have to do everything to still make a difference.

And that lesson? That one took me a long time to learn.

If You're Sitting at That Table Right Now...

If you're where I was last year - staring at your calendar, your checklist, your child's graduation date circled in ink that suddenly feels way too permanent, I want you to know a few things.

Not because I read them somewhere.

But because I lived them.

You don't have to hold it together all the time.

You might surprise yourself with how strong you are in the big moments (the packing, the goodbyes, the "we've got this" energy). But it's the quiet after that will get you. Let it. That doesn't mean you're falling apart. It means you loved deeply.

The quiet is louder than you expect.

No one really prepares you for that part. The absence of noise, of movement, of being needed in the same way. It feels uncomfortable at first. Almost wrong. But it won't always feel that way.

You will feel a little lost.

And that's okay. For years, your life revolved around raising your children and showing up for everyone else. It makes sense that when that shifts, you need time to find your footing again. There is nothing wrong with you, you are just in between versions of your life.

Start smaller than you think you need to.

You don't need a new five-year plan. You don't need to figure it all out right away. Some days, getting up, getting dressed, and doing one thing that makes you feel like yourself again is enough. (And yes, some days that one thing might still be tackling a mystery stain. You never fully retire from that.)

You don't stop being "that mom."

You just aren't needed in the same ways anymore. And while that stings, it also makes room for something new. You'll still care. You'll still show up. It will just look different.

Stay connected.

It's easy to pull inward during this transition. I did. But the days I reached out—to a friend, a fellow

PTA mom, even just a quick text—those were the days that felt a little lighter.

Give yourself more grace than you think you need.

This is a big transition. Bigger than most people acknowledge. You are allowed to feel proud, sad, relieved, lost, and hopeful... sometimes all in the same day.

And maybe the most important thing I've learned this past year:

There is life after the checklist.

It's quieter.

It's slower.

It's different.

But it's still yours.

Now, when I sit at my kitchen table with my iced coffee, I still reach for my notebook.

But my lists?

They look like this:

Call Jake.

Plan a visit to Florida.

Walk.

Check in with a PTA friend.

Work.

Rest.

Repeat.

It's not as full.

It's not as frantic.

But it's real.

And it's enough.

A year ago, I thought I was writing the last checklist.

Turns out... I was just closing one chapter.

This past year has been about learning how to live in the space that came after.

And if I've learned anything, it's this:

You don't stop being who you were in that busy, beautiful season of life.

You just carry it forward... a little quieter, a little wiser... and maybe with a little more room to breathe.

And every once in a while...

You still make a list.

Save the Date!

NYS PTA 130th Annual Convention

November 13–15, 2026
Saratoga Hilton and City Center

Click Here to Learn More About Convention!

Get ready for an unforgettable weekend filled with learning, collaboration, and celebration! Whether you're a first-time attendee or a seasoned leader, Convention offers something for everyone.

- **Workshops designed for today's PTA leaders**
- **Networking with members from every region**
- **PTA business meetings and elections**
- **Awards and special recognition celebrations**
- **Exhibitors featuring programs and services for PTAs**

Congratulations!

**Riverside High School PTSA,
Yonkers (Westchester-East Putnam)**

This NYS PTA unit celebrated their
100th anniversary of their charter on

April 1, 1926





SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

National PTA School of Excellence Program

National PTA School of Excellence recognition program opens the lines of communication and critical thinking within school communities to make data-driven decisions that yield positive, long-term

results. School of Excellence is committed to supporting and recognizing partnerships between local PTAs and schools to enrich the educational experience and overall well-being for all students. Enrollment for the 2026-2027 program is open until October 15. Review this [sample Enrollment Form](#) to see what information is required. [Click Here to Enroll Today!](#)

Shine THIS SUMMER

Simple Ways to Boost Mental Health

By Shauna Wold, Mental Health Specialist

The school year is quickly coming to an end, and with it comes thoughts of no more homework, alarms set later, and days spent playing and hanging out by the pool. But amongst the summer plans, there's a reality that often gets overlooked: mental health doesn't take a vacation. Summertime can bring stress in the form of loss of routines, isolation and body-image issues.

To make your youth's summer the healthiest it can be both mentally and physically, keep in mind the following:

Set realistic expectations The pressure to make this the "best summer ever" can be overwhelming. It's okay if every day isn't productive, social or perfect.

Prioritize hydration and nutrition Heat affects mood, energy and focus. Drinking water regularly and eating balanced meals can help mental and physical health.

Stay connected socially Summer breaks, vacations and shifting schedules can lead to loneliness. Reach out to friends, volunteer, participate in summer reading clubs -- staying connected doesn't require big plans, just small steps that remind you that you are part of something bigger.

Limit comparison Social media is full of "perfect" images. Remember: people post highlights of when they are busy, not during downtime. Try not to compare your life to what others display on social media.

Wear what feels comfortable Comfort is confidence. No one should feel pressured to wear trends or summer outfits. Clothes that feel good help the mind feel safer and more grounded.

For the 2025-2026 school year, the Wellness team has been posting Mental Health Monday and Wellness Wednesday tips. These weekly tips offer physical, emotional and social health support for every child and every family. The posts can be found on on NYS PTA's Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Wishing you and your families a fun-filled, safe, healthy summer!



GROWING WELLNESS TOGETHER

.....
Ending the School Year Strong

By Maria Sanders, NYS PTA Environment Specialist

As the school year comes to a close, families are looking forward to sunshine, outdoor adventures and meaningful time together. Summer is the perfect opportunity to slow down, enjoy nature and build eco-friendly habits that support overall wellness. Across New York State, PTAs continue to lead impactful work that supports student health, environmental stewardship and community connection.

Environmental Excellence Award Spotlight

This year, NYS PTA proudly introduced the first-ever Environmental Excellence Award, recognizing PTA units and leaders making a meaningful impact through environmental stewardship and sustainability efforts. We were incredibly excited to see the creativity, passion and real-world impact PTAs are making in their schools and communities across New York State. From environmental education projects

to community cleanups, school gardens and sustainability initiatives, PTAs rolled up their sleeves and got to work making a difference. Some of the inspiring projects included:

- Students participating in school-wide recycling initiatives, community cleanups, beautification projects and hands-on water conservation lessons for students
- Sustainable gardening practices and student-led garden programs focused on conservation, pollinators and building watering systems
- School garden and seed

bank programs that helped address food insecurity, teach sustainable food practices and strengthen cultural and community connections

- Expanded environmental education programs including pollinator and vegetable gardens, composting and community recycling initiatives

Congratulations to our inaugural Environmental Excellence Award recipient, Sunquam Elementary School PTA, whose dedication to environmental awareness, community involvement and student engagement truly reflects the spirit of PTA. From a vibrant courtyard filled with garden beds and a positivity rock



NYS PTA EARTH DAY ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNER!



SUNQUAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PTA, SUFFOLK REGION

garden to a butterfly ecosystem that helps protect monarchs, students experience hands-on environmental learning all year long. In honor of Earth Day, nearly 200 students plant and care for flowers, while the school's Garden Club harvests, replants and explores plant propagation. A PTA-led plant sale helps sustain these efforts and continue growing the program. Powered by students, families and staff, their work shows how environmental education can grow from the ground up.

Summer Eco-Adventures

Summer is one of the easiest times to help children build a stronger connection with nature while supporting overall wellness. Research continues to show that time outdoors supports both physical and mental health. The less structured days of summer can sometimes affect routines and mental health for both children and adults. Make time for connection, conversation and rest. Encourage children and teens to unplug from devices periodically and spend time outdoors, reading, creating or simply relaxing. Nature exposure can reduce stress, improve mood, strengthen focus, increase activity levels and support better sleep for children and adults alike. Turn everyday outings into learning experiences. Look for pollinators, collect natural items, identify plants or pick up litter during family walks. Plant a small garden with herbs or vegetables, or grow pollinator-friendly flowers like milkweed and coneflowers. Simple family moments like backyard camping, stargazing or sunset walks often become the most meaningful memories.

To help make outdoor adventures even more enjoyable, here's a simple DIY bird feeder recipe family can make together:



YOU'LL NEED:

- An empty toilet paper roll or pinecone
- Sunflower seed butter or peanut butter
- Birdseed
- String or twine

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Spread the seed butter or peanut butter onto the roll or pinecone, roll it in birdseed, attach a string and hang it from a tree branch. Then sit back and enjoy birdwatching together!

I'm admiring a stunning pair of blue jays from my kitchen window as I type this. This simple activity helps children connect with nature, learn about local wildlife and understand how small actions can support the environment.

As we head into summer, remember that wellness is about caring for ourselves, our mental health, our communities and the environment around us. The little choices we make every day really do add up. Be sure to follow NYS PTA on social media throughout the summer and school year for our ongoing Wellness Wednesday tips and Mental Health Monday resources. These weekly reminders and ideas help support healthy families, healthy schools and healthy communities.

Thank you to every PTA volunteer, family member, educator and student who helped make this year a success.

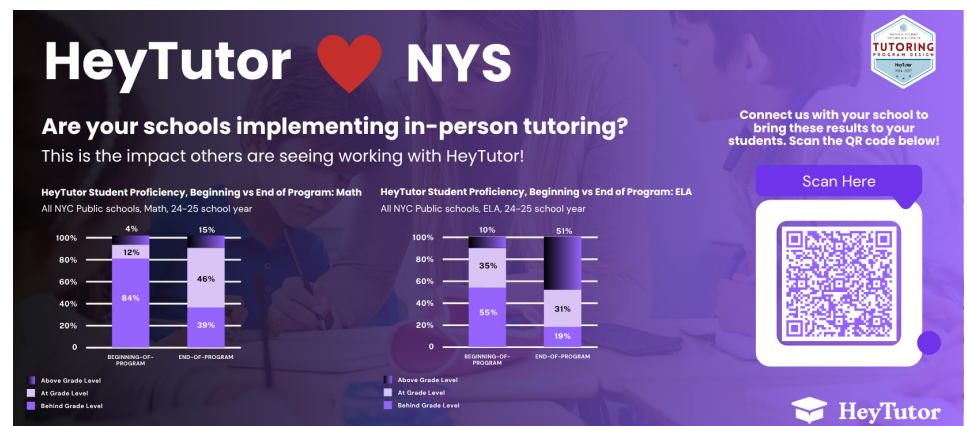
Your efforts continue to strengthen our schools and support the well-being of children across New York State.

Summer Fun Resources

Looking for easy ways to keep kids engaged, active and learning all summer long? Here are a few family-friendly resources to explore:

- Every Kid Outdoors – Free access for fourth graders and their families to national parks and public lands
- National Park Service (NPS) – Junior Ranger programs, scavenger hunts and outdoor learning activities
- NYS PTA – Follow us on social media for weekly Wellness Wednesday and Mental Health Monday tips
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Kid-friendly environmental games, activities and learning tools

No matter where your summer takes you, there are always simple ways to learn, explore and connect with nature right in your own community. Here's to a summer filled with sunshine, laughter, fresh air, green adventures and plenty of memories made together. Happy summer from NYS PTA!



HeyTutor NYS

Are your schools implementing in-person tutoring?
This is the impact others are seeing working with HeyTutor!

HeyTutor Student Proficiency, Beginning vs End of Program: Math
All NYC Public schools, Math, 24-25 school year

Proficiency Level	Beginning of Program	End of Program
Above Grade Level	4%	15%
At Grade Level	84%	46%
Behind Grade Level	12%	39%

HeyTutor Student Proficiency, Beginning vs End of Program: ELA
All NYC Public schools, ELA, 24-25 school year

Proficiency Level	Beginning of Program	End of Program
Above Grade Level	10%	51%
At Grade Level	35%	31%
Behind Grade Level	55%	19%

Connect us with your school to bring these results to your students. Scan the QR code below!

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HeyTutor

A Notebook That Helps You Advocate

A simple way to...



**DOCUMENT**
changes

**SPOT**
patterns

**PREPARE**
for the fall

By Lissa Zukoff, NYS PTA Special Education Specialist

Summer break is supposed to feel like relief. But if your child struggles with transitions, the end of school can feel less like freedom and more like the start of a long stretch of uncertainty.

My son did not do well with transitions and changes. Every year, as happy as I was to be done with homework, chaotic end-of-school celebrations, and navigating dress-like-a-pirate day (or some version thereof), I still dreaded the end of school and saying goodbye to our familiar teachers and routines. Worries about regression or a difficult return to school in the fall were always in the background, too.

Eventually, I figured out a way to help track these concerns. Whether your child attends camp, receives extended school year (ESY) services, or spends quiet time at home, this is something you can do.

Start with a notebook. It can be any notebook, but I suggest one that makes you smile. Maybe it has a motivational quote, a sparkly cover, or thick paper. Even if it is just a one-subject spiral you grabbed from the unused school supplies sent home at the end of

the year, all you really need is a place to begin.

Jot down notes on everything relating to your child. For example, you might write down:

- Meltdowns or difficult moments
- New foods they try
- Friendships or social wins
- Health concerns
- Changes in communication
- Milestones achieved
- Regression of skills

Together, these notes begin to paint a picture of your child and their summer. Write in whatever way works for you, whether that is bullet points or a brain dump, but be sure to date each entry. It does not have to take long, just a few minutes a day.

I'm Gen-X, so I like my paper (I still use a paper planner, don't judge me!). But if you truly prefer a notes app, go for it. Still, in this case, having everything written down in one place makes it easier to see the full picture and to share it with the school, therapists, and physicians. For this one thing, I suggest going old school.

The key is to gather data. Once school is back in session, these

notes can be invaluable if you need to advocate for changes to an IEP or discuss medication with a physician. Because everything is dated and recorded as it happens, you can see growth where you might once have noticed only problems. You may also begin to recognize triggers and patterns in behavior.

I will confess that eventually I had to start keeping two notebooks, because this became a journal for me and I wanted to keep my personal thoughts more private. Now I tend to get creative with mine, using stickers, doodles, washi tape, and little bits tucked into the pages. I treasure my old journals and the creativity they bring out in me. They also helped me see my own patterns and forced me to recognize that I needed to learn to ask for help, which is not something I do easily.

In the end, the notebook is more than a place to store details. It gives you something concrete to carry into the fall. What feels insignificant day to day can still reveal a pattern over time. Sometimes the smallest habit becomes the tool that helps you feel a little more prepared, a little more confident, and a little less alone.



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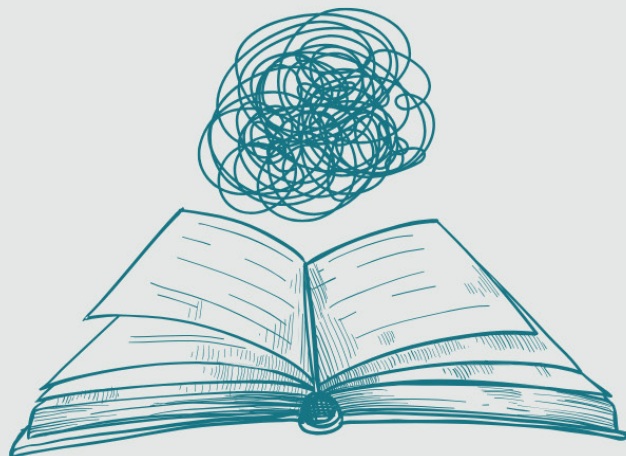


NorthwellSM
Katz Institute for
Women's Health

Claim based on 2023 SPARCS data for elective discharges and ambulatory surgeries amongst females

Raising America's Readers

Why are our secondary students struggling with basic literacy?



By Kathleen Jenne, NYS PTA Programs Coordinator

This year, I took on a new challenge and accepted a role as a teacher in a Pre-Kindergarten Inclusion Classroom. As you can imagine, learning more about early literacy instruction quickly became a priority. Many an evening has been spent reading through various educational publications and blogs to try to expand my understanding of how best to teach students to read. Recently I came across some statistics that I found staggering:

Illiteracy by the numbers:

- 45 million Americans are functionally illiterate and cannot read above a fifth-grade level
- 50% of adults cannot read a book written at an eighth-grade level
- 1/3 of fourth-graders reach the proficient reading level
- 85% of juvenile offenders have problems reading
- 3 out of 5 people in American prisons can't read
- 3 out of 4 people on welfare can't read - [Literacy Project Foundation](https://www.literacyproject.org/)

I come from a long line of bibliophiles. I literally cannot remember a time that I wasn't surrounded by books, being read to, or reading myself. Weekly trips to the library meant bringing

home bags full of stories to read and re-read. My grandparents', aunts', and my parents' shelves were filled nearly to bursting with rows upon rows of multicolored spines and covers, behind which a million different worlds waited to be discovered. My brothers and I were blessed to have a former elementary school teacher for a Mother, as well as a teacher who was a certified reading specialist for an aunt. I married a fellow nerd who also grew up devouring books like there was no tomorrow, so when I became a parent myself, I was sure learning to read would be equally as simple and fundamental to my children as breathing. I pictured precocious little bookworms in oversized chairs happily reading the classics I had saved from my own childhood. I couldn't have been more wrong. My sons were and are always eager to be read to, and more than willing to listen to audiobooks, but, to them, reading is something to be avoided. My youngest can often be won over by a book that appeals to his interests (Thank you, Andy Reid, for writing his current favorite, Project Hail Mary!) but for my older child, even that doesn't always do the trick. They just weren't big readers. And, after speaking with friends and acquaintances, they were not

alone in this. Interest in reading seems to have declined across their age groups. More alarmingly, many of their peers were struggling with basic reading skills, which caused them a great deal of frustration and naturally led to an overall aversion to books. When [Edweek](https://www.edweek.org/) recently polled secondary level teachers, the number one answer for why their students were struggling with basic reading skills was, "They aren't motivated to read assigned texts/interested in reading."

What caused this? Was it just that they were members of the TikTok generation, too used to the faster pace of vlogs and clips to enjoy a good book? Or was there something more fundamental, something in the way they were learning to read at play as well?

In the very first episode of the popular literacy education podcast, "[Sold a Story: How Teaching Kids To Read Went So Wrong](https://www.soldastory.com/)", parent Corrine Adams shared her story of supervising distance learning during the lockdown. Her account of discovering how few practical literacy skills her child had almost perfectly mirrored our own experience. Like Adams and many of you, I had to become my children's co-teacher during the Covid pandemic lockdown. My at-the-time fourth grader was able to navigate Zoom classes

and Google Classroom easily but my first grader was completely lost. He had been slowly coming along in reading but was nowhere near ready to handle daily emails, multiple electronic assignments, and navigating different Zoom sessions. As I was a stay-at-home parent during this time, I was able to set up a classroom for my sons in our living room and sit in on my youngest's sessions. What I observed in their reading and ELA classes was different from what my own experience had been.

“Schools think they’re teaching kids to read. Of course they do. But it turns out there’s a big body of scientific research about reading and how kids learn to do it. This research shows there are important skills that all kids need to learn to become good readers. And in lots of schools, they aren’t being taught these skills.” “...65% of fourth graders in this country are not proficient readers, ... And the problem is even worse when you look beyond the average and focus on specific groups of children. The most alarming statistic: Eighty-two percent of Black fourth graders are not proficient readers. That’s more than 8 in 10 Black children. ... Corinne Adams says what she’s learned over the past couple of years is that if you want to make sure your children can read, you should teach them yourself.” - [Sold a Story](#)

My children had phenomenal teachers and attended a “good school district.” Yet, they and their peers seemed to struggle with the basics. Even the methodology struck us as being radically different from our own experience. Using “context clues from the picture” seemed to have replaced the old “sound it out” method. My friends and I were blowing up group chats with texts related to

our frustrations and collective realization that our kids weren’t really reading. And we weren’t alone in this. It was a national issue, and one that would have lasting negative effects. “Fifty-eight percent—more than half of the educators—said a quarter or more of their middle and high school students had difficulty with basic reading skills.” ([Edweek](#)) The statistics on recent high school graduates were equally as bleak.

“One in four young adults across the U.S. is functionally illiterate - yet more than half earned high school diplomas, according to recently released data. The number of 16-to-24 year olds reading at the lowest literacy levels increased from 16% in 2017 to 25% in 2023, according to data released in December from the National Center for Education Statistics in partnership with the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies.” - [The 74](#)

America’s schoolchildren were, for all intents and purposes, on the road to being functionally illiterate. Our children are now in Middle, Junior, and High School and the impact their early literacy education had on themselves and their cohort is startlingly apparent. Recent assessments revealed that, **“Overall, student achievement has not returned to pre-pandemic performance,”... “Where there are signs of recovery, they are mostly in math and largely driven by higher-performing students. Lower-performing students are struggling, especially in reading.” - [The Hill](#)**



My husband and I were privileged enough to have the time and resources needed to supplement their schooling with 1:1 reading instruction time. We taught our youngest to read “old-school” style and were able to help prevent our oldest from sliding academically while they were out of traditional classrooms. But what about those students whose “grownups” couldn’t afford to take that time away from professional responsibilities or had the means to acquire the needed resources? How were America’s children going to be prepared for the future? And, the most pressing question for me, how had our schools gotten to this place?

To find the answer, we need to understand the prominent role the childhood literacy philosophy called “the balanced literacy movement,” played in early 21st century pedagogy, and its public face, former Columbia Teachers College professor, [Lucy Calkins](#). The program’s instruction structure led to an emphasis on decoding strategies over learning phonics.

“The program gives insufficient time and attention to phonics skills and recommends teachers use the so-called “three-cueing system” (read: guessing) to help children get past unfamiliar words they’re unable to decode ‘in direct opposition to an enormous body of settled research.’ There is ‘insufficient guidance’ for teachers

on how to use assessments to inform instruction. 'This means any student who does not immediately master an aspect of foundational reading is at risk of never getting it.'" - [The Shortcomings of Lucy Calkins' Units of Study](#)

This educational model would prove to go against everything research has taught us about the "[Science of Reading](#)" and left many children struggling. There simply wasn't enough time in the school day to cover everything under the balanced literacy umbrella and key phonetic skills were not being taught. Someone would have to fill in the gaps. For all too many children, the deficits of the new reading programs combined with the lack of family resources to engage the private tutoring and/or provide 1:1 time with parents and guardians to model successful reading strategies meant they were left behind their more economically advantaged peers.

"The reality is, though, that there is nothing more important than helping our children access the words. In the end, there is no reading without words. Whether you are discussing language comprehension or word recognition, accessing words is reading." - [Campbell Creates Readers](#)

When the "Sold a Story" podcast premiered in 2022, the floodgates opened with educators, parents, caregivers, and government officials in the multitudes calling out for change. In our own state, NYSED incorporated the methods proved to be successful in the [Science of Reading](#) into Elementary curriculum. A [Pre-Kindergarten to third grade best practices instruction guide](#) was released to New Yorkers in January of 2025 along with a [series of briefs](#) outlining best practices for literacy instruction

for pre-K through 12th grade. The goal became creating lifelong readers by instructing students on six high-impact instructional practices:

- Collaborative and Culminating Projects, Performances, and Celebrations
- Text-Based Discussion and Writing Opportunities
- Engagement with a Variety of High Interest,
- Diverse, and Complex Texts
- Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study Skill-Building
- Fostering Understanding of Print Conventions, Features, and Function - [Science of Reading: The Secondary Years](#)

[Our most recent testing data](#) shows that our elementary students are starting to return to literacy assessment performance levels similar to those seen before the pandemic. Analysis of the NYSED data by [ABC news](#) revealed that 53% of NYS students grades 3-8 were proficient in English. (Math proficiency among the same cohort was at 57% for 2024-2025.) Regents exams revealed that our high schoolers currently have a 75% proficiency in English, although it is important to keep in mind that not all students take the elementary assessments

and the Regents exams.

America's Secondary students are still struggling to develop the essential literacy skills they need to become a successful adult. The new NYSED science standards require students to be proficient readers. As seen by the lower marks last years' students earned on the new Regents exams for Earth and Space Sciences, Biology, and even in Geometry, our secondary students are still being affected by the impact the pandemic and Lucy Calkins' work had on their primary education. That said, the work IS being done to improve secondary students' literacy skills but more is needed. All our state leaders and school districts must commit to increasing access to academic intervention programs, as well as providing professional development for Pre-K to 12 teachers focused on the new literacy standards. This won't happen without your advocacy efforts. Please reach out to your state legislators and local school board and push for more intervention services for Secondary students.

Support NYS PTA advocacy efforts by regularly utilizing [Voter Voice](#) to contact National and State elected officials and call for their support for increased educational funding. Our future depends on raising skilled readers.



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Toolkit

Preventing the Summer Slide

By Susan Brown, MSE, Field Support Coordinator

We've heard of it, the summer slide. Research shows that over the summer students lose reading and math skills, sometimes by as much of 20% of a year's skills in reading and nearly 30% in math. This is super concerning especially when students in low-income households tend to lose the most. What we often don't hear about are the executive function slides that happen over the summer, particularly for students with disabilities like ADHD and ASD.

Executive function includes skills like time management, planning and task initiation. We work hard over the school year to develop these skills, and we can do things over the summer to help our children build and maintain them.

Here are some simple things you can do to help your summer go more smoothly for your children who are struggling. They also reinforce planning and time management skills that are essential for life success.

1. Balance structure and flexibility. Have some routines that you continue: weekly religious service attendance, Sunday family dinners or lunches, weekly room cleaning, Friday game night,

chores and exercise. These routines provide structure but do not prevent essential free time.

2. Establish an expected bedtime and wake time. Yes, kids want to sleep in and stay up late, but it takes up to two weeks to allow your internal clock to reset. These routines help children have the daytime for family, human interaction and friends and limit doom scrolling. Set bedtime and wake times also help maximize a child's ability to learn and control their emotions and behaviors. Routines help build executive functions.

3. Map out daily and weekly plans. What are you doing today or this week? Especially younger kids still benefit from schedules that you plan. Children can help plan vacations, even if it is a choice: horseback riding or swimming, roasting s'mores or going for ice cream. Have them think about what is on the schedule for the week. Include things like doctor appointments, chores and summer reading requirements. Plan how to read at least three books over the summer. Make it a contest between them and you on who can read the most interesting book or read a book together. Every week,

share progress as you read.

4. Manage screen time. We are finishing up our first school year without cell phones in school. Prevent bounce back addiction by maintaining limits that exist during the school year. When I was a kid it was TV, now it is social media and YouTube. Kids being bored is important because it provides time to build creativity. Don't buy in to the "I don't have anything other than the screen to keep me busy" complaint. They have plenty, if they use their minds.

5. Sign your child up for activities. Send kids out to play. Send them to rec centers, library programs, summer camps, book clubs, volunteer opportunities, classes to learn new skills or jobs. This helps structure their time, facilitates social interactions and gives them structure that all kids benefit from.

6. Tackle a big project together. Summer is a great time to work on a project with your child. It could be growing a garden, refinishing a piece of furniture, cleaning out the basement, building a Lego robot or a soapbox derby car, or learn a new skill like knitting or baking together. Even going through each closet and dresser. Donating or disposing of things that don't fit or

you don't want any more is a great together task. Have them plan how to complete the task, predict how long each step will take and evaluate how they are moving toward success.

7. Establish parent check ins. How are things going over the summer? Are they accomplishing the things they want? Are they troubled by a relationship with a friend? Are they frustrated because they cannot do something their friend can? What is the most interesting thing they did this week? What is something nice they did for someone each day? What do they need help with? What do they think they can

begin to tackle that they could not before? Are they excited that they accomplished a goal? Are they anxious about the new school year or move to a new school? Can you plan a trip to check out the new school or talk to a teacher about how to prepare children for the year ahead? Talk about what is working or not and how to adjust the routines they have.

By helping your child plan activities and goals and track progress toward them, you are helping them use those executive skill muscles that we want every child to develop. You are also helping them be ready for the fall when it comes around.



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Honor a Special Volunteer in Your PTA

Are you looking for a special way to honor your most dedicated volunteers? Present them with the [Honorary Life Member Award](#) at your next event!

The purpose of this award is to recognize individuals for their contributions to the welfare of children and youth. The financial contribution supports the Twin Projects.

Already awarded a volunteer with the Honorary Life Member Award and want to highlight them even more? Present them [the Golden Oak Plaque or the Diamond Award!](#)

New York State PTA is proud to share the Golden Oak Award plaque and the Diamond Award table-top sculpture. Each award is beautifully crafted, to make a distinguished presentation to an honoree. Both feature personalized engraving with the name of the award recipient, and bear the signature of our state president.

Proceeds from the Golden Oak and Diamond Awards will be dedicated to leadership development throughout the state. Make a positive contribution to the future of PTA, while at the same time honoring the dedication and excellence of members past and present!

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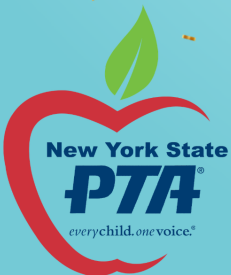
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THANK YOU!



TEACHING CHILDREN

THE POWER OF RESPECTFUL DISAGREEMENT

By Velida (Val) Ford, Family Engagement Coordinator



In today's world, disagreements are everywhere. They happen online, in group chats, in classrooms, and even within our homes. As adults, we recognize that opinions can be strong and, at times, deeply conflicting. That is why it is so important to be intentional about teaching our children how to navigate these moments.

Without guidance, children are often left to make sense of complex issues on their own. Many turn to social media, where information moves quickly and is not always accurate or complete. As families, educators, and community members, we play a critical role in helping children pause, reflect, and think critically about what they see and hear.

One of the most important lessons we can teach is that perspective matters. Two people can experience the same situation or view the same information and walk away with entirely different interpretations. Helping children understand this builds empathy and encourages them to approach conversations with curiosity rather than judgment.

Disagreement itself is not something to avoid. It is something to teach. When guided appropriately, it becomes an opportunity for growth, learning, and deeper understanding. As parents, teachers, community members, and partners within

our PTA, we each play an essential role in modeling what respectful disagreement looks like in practice.

Through PTA, we are uniquely positioned to bring families, schools, and communities together around a shared goal of supporting the whole child. This includes helping students develop the skills to navigate differing perspectives with confidence, empathy, and respect. Whether during meetings, school events, classroom discussions, or everyday interactions, our words and actions set the tone.

By working together within PTA, we can create consistent expectations for how disagreements are handled. We can encourage open dialogue, promote thoughtful questioning, and ensure that every voice is heard and valued. When children observe adults engaging respectfully, even when opinions differ, they learn that disagreement is not something to fear. It is something that can strengthen relationships and deepen understanding.

Important Lessons to Share with Our Children:

- Disagreement does not equal disrespect. It is possible to express different opinions without personal attacks.
- Opinions should be supported

by facts. Asking, "Where did that information come from?" builds critical thinking.

- Strong emotions are normal, but causing harm to others is not. Emotional awareness and self-regulation are essential life skills.
- Listening matters. Understanding another perspective is just as important as sharing your own.

In a fast-paced, digital world, reacting quickly is easy. If we are honest, many of us as adults have done the same. Emotional reactions are natural, especially when information is constant and overwhelming. However, our responsibility goes beyond reacting. We must lead by example.

By practicing these skills ourselves and intentionally teaching our children to pause, think, and respond thoughtfully, we are building habits that will serve them for a lifetime. These are not just communication skills. They are life skills rooted in self-awareness, respect, and critical thinking.

PTA provides a powerful platform

to reinforce this work. It creates a bridge between families and schools, allowing us to align our efforts and model consistent, respectful communication. It also offers space for meaningful conversations where questions are welcomed, diverse viewpoints are respected, and collaboration is encouraged.

When children see adults engaging in this way, they learn that thoughtful dialogue is not only possible. It is essential.

By slowing down, checking our reactions, and approaching conversations with respect, we help build stronger, more inclusive communities. In doing so, we are not only supporting our children's growth but also strengthening the culture of our schools.

At its core, the message we are teaching our children is both simple and powerful:

- It is okay to disagree.
- It is not okay to harm,

demean, or silence others.

By reinforcing these values, we are helping to shape a generation that is thoughtful, respectful, and prepared to engage in meaningful conversations, no matter what the topic or who is at the table. Together, as parents, educators, and community members, we ensure that our children are not only heard, but also equipped to listen, understand, and lead with respect in every space they enter.

Celebrating Pride, Building Belonging: NYS Pride PTSA's Commitment to Every Child

By Patricia Genco, NYS Pride PTSA President

As we welcome the summer season; a time for reflection, renewal, and connection, the New York State Pride PTSA proudly celebrates the strength, diversity, and resilience of our school communities.

June is recognized as Pride Month, but for us, the work of creating safe, inclusive, and affirming spaces for all children and families continues year-round. At NYS Pride PTSA, we believe that every child deserves to feel seen, valued, and supported, exactly as they are.

Across New York State, PTAs play a vital role in shaping school environments where diversity is embraced and equity is prioritized. Through collaboration with local units, councils, and regions, NYS Pride PTSA works to uplift LGBTQ+ students and families by promoting inclusive policies, supporting affirming practices, and providing resources that foster understanding and respect.

Our mission is grounded in partnership. We work alongside families, educators, and community leaders to ensure that

inclusion is not just an idea, but a lived experience in our schools. Whether it's supporting inclusive curriculum, advocating for safe school climates, or offering tools to help families navigate important conversations, we are committed to meeting communities where they are and helping them grow.

Summer offers a unique opportunity for families to reconnect, recharge, and engage in meaningful conversations. It's a time to explore, learn, and celebrate the diversity that makes our communities stronger. We encourage families to take this time to listen, to learn, and to continue building spaces of belonging at home and in their communities.

As we look ahead to the new school year, NYS Pride PTSA remains dedicated to ensuring that every child walks into their school feeling safe, supported, and proud of who they are.

Together, we can continue to build a future where every voice is heard, every identity is respected, and every child has the opportunity to thrive.



**NYS PTA became the
FIRST in the NATION to
charter a statewide
LGBTQ+ PTA unit.**

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