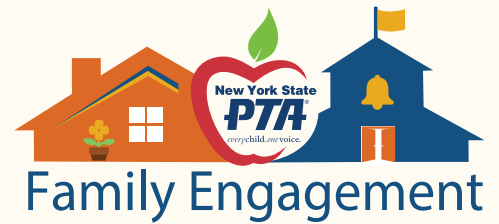


Be PTA® Engaged

Family Engagement Newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of Be PTA Engaged! Within these pages, you'll find resources, insights, updates, and stories that highlight the many ways PTAs across New York State are strengthening family engagement. From practical tools and statewide initiatives to local highlights and shared experiences, each section offers ideas and resources to help you stay connected, build capacity, and create meaningful partnerships among families, schools, and communities. We hope this issue inspires you to explore new ideas, share what is working in your PTA, and continue building strong, welcoming connections with the families and communities you serve.



Connect



Support



Empower



Advocate



Welcome to the Second Edition of

Be PTA[®] Engaged

As we begin a new PTA year, we are pleased to share the second edition of Be PTA Engaged.

Thank you for joining us as we continue to explore the many ways family engagement can strengthen our PTAs, our schools, and the communities we serve across New York State.

In this issue, you'll find practical strategies, timely resources, helpful updates, and stories that highlight family engagement in action. Our goal remains the same: to provide ideas and information that you can take back to your PTA or PTSA and adapt to meet the unique needs of your families and school community.

Family engagement is an ongoing process. It grows through relationships, communication, collaboration, and opportunities for families to have a meaningful voice in their children's education and school community. Whether you are welcoming new families, strengthening connections with returning families, building partnerships with your school, or looking for new ways to involve families who may not yet feel connected, every effort makes a difference.

As the school year gets underway, this is an important time to build on the connections established over the summer and create meaningful opportunities for families to become engaged throughout the year. Small steps, an invitation, a conversation, a welcoming event, or an opportunity to share their voice can help families feel that they truly belong.

Through Be PTA Engaged, we hope to continue connecting statewide priorities with local action and sharing ideas that can inspire PTAs, PTSAs, Councils, SEPTAs, and SEPTSA organizations of every size and from every community.

Thank you for the time, energy, and heart you bring to family engagement. Together, we can continue building strong partnerships that support student success, strengthen our school communities, and advance the mission of New York State PTA.

Here's to another year of connection, collaboration, and meaningful family engagement. Welcome back to Be PTA Engaged!

Discover What's Inside:

- Connection to NYS PTA Resources
- Governance Team Spotlight
- PTA Unit Family Engagement Checklist
- NYS PTA Proposed Slate of Officers | 2026–2028
- Making Every Family Feel Welcome
- Beyond the Event: Building Meaningful Family Engagement
- Building Stronger Connections: The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships
- Family Engagement: A Pathway to PTA Membership

Resources



Scan or Click the QR Codes for more information. Family Engagement

Explore NYS PTA's Bylaws Sample Procedures and use the Bylaws Wizard to review, update, and maintain your unit or council's governing documents with ease.



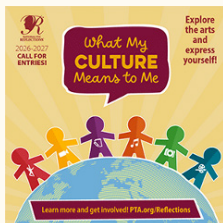
Leadership Webinar Series



Build your leadership skills through our Leadership Development webinars and earn your Leadership Development Pin at SLC 2027.



Start Planning Your 2026-27 Reflections Program!



Learn More!

Start Planning Your 2026-27 PARP Program!

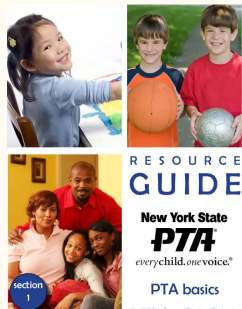


Learn More!



FILE 990

File 990 is a free service for ALL NYS PTA units



Find the answers you need in the NYS PTA Resource Guide, your go-to reference for leadership, governance, finance, membership, programs, and more.



Suggested Sections:
Explore Section 02: President's Guide and Section 05-A: Finance for essential information every PTA leader should know.

Outside Resources

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

211 Community Resources and Social Services

Connects families with local resources for housing, food, utility assistance, healthcare, and other community services.

Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.



Stop Bullying



Federal resources on bullying prevention and response.

Safe Routes to School



Empowering kids and families to walk, bike, and roll safely every day.



Listen to Bite-Sized Insights, a podcast by NYS PTA! Real talk from real PTA leaders across New York!



Follow NYS PTA on social media for the latest news, resources, upcoming events, advocacy updates, and family engagement ideas.



@NYSPTA



@NYSPTA



@new_york_state_pta



@NYSPTA

NYS PTA DEI Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/nysptadiversityandinclusion>



NYS PTA Leaders Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/nysptaleaders>



Resources



Scan or Click the QR Codes for more information. Family Engagement

What's Going on in Your Region?

As the new PTA year gets underway, it's a great time to check in on your PTA's Good Standing requirements. Staying current on these requirements helps ensure your PTA is ready to operate successfully, access available resources, and continue serving your school community.

Here are some key items to check:

- Membership: Have at least 25 paid members by October 31.
- AIM Insurance: Maintain current AIM insurance coverage
- Bylaws: Make sure your PTA has current, approved bylaws.
- IRS & Tax Status: Confirm that your PTA's IRS status has not been revoked and that required tax filings are up to date; the deadline is Nov. 15th.
- Officers: Make sure all current officers are listed in Givebacks.

- Financial Accountability Training: The President and Treasurer must complete the required Financial Accountability Training.

Not sure whether your PTA has completed all these requirements? Your Region is here to help! Reach out to your Region Director with questions, to confirm what may still be needed, or for assistance getting your PTA back on track.

Keeping these requirements up to date throughout the year helps your PTA stay on track and ready to focus on what matters most supporting students, engaging families, and strengthening your school community.

Connect with your Region Director:

<https://nyspta.org/home/about/contact/contacts-region-directors/>

Have a great idea for your classroom?
Apply for the Innovative Teacher Grant for a chance to earn:

\$400 For innovative projects that support student learning.

Apply by October 31

Have a big idea for your classroom? The NYS PTA Innovative Teacher Grant gives teachers the opportunity to bring innovative ideas to life and make a meaningful impact on student learning. Learn more and apply:



SUSANNE SMOLLER COMMITMENT TO ADVOCACY YOUTH AWARD

OPEN TO HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS WHO ARE COMMITTED TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION OR TRAINING AND CONTINUED ACTIVE ADVOCACY

\$500 AWARD & ATTEND NYS PTA LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT AND LOBBY DAY!

YOUR VOICE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE! APPLY FOR THE SUSANNE SMOLLER COMMITMENT TO ADVOCACY YOUTH AWARD!

APPLICATION DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 15

Are you a student advocate ready to make a difference? The Susanne Smoller Commitment to Advocacy Youth Award recognizes a NYS high school senior making an impact through advocacy and includes a \$500 award. Learn more and apply:



Jenkins Memorial Scholarship

Open to High School Seniors attending a school where there is a PTA/PTSA unit in good standing who will be pursuing a degree in education at a State University of New York (SUNY).

Scholarship Amount: **\$4,000**

START YOUR JOURNEY TO THE CLASSROOM

Application Deadline: **December 15**

Planning a career in education? The Jenkins Memorial Scholarship for Teacher Education provides \$4,000 to help a NYS high school senior pursuing a teaching career through SUNY. Learn more and apply:



NYS PTA *Coordinators*



Patricia Genco
NYS PTA Wellness Coordinator

Learn About Patricia & How She
Can Support Your PTA on page 13

Contact Patricia Today:
wellness@nyspta.org



Kathleen Jenne
NYS PTA Programs Coordinator

Learn About Kathleen & How She
Can Support Your PTA on page 14

Contact Kathleen Today:
programs@nyspta.org



Cindy Ames
NYS PTA Field Support Coordinator

Learn About Cindy & How She
Can Support Your PTA on page 15

Contact Cindy Today:
fieldsupportames@nyspta.org

NYS PTA *Specialists*



Jennifer Pollock-Hurst
NYS PTA Arts Specialist

Learn About Jennifer & How She
Can Support Your PTA on page 16

Contact Jennifer Today:
arts@nyspta.org



Lotoya Anderson
NYS PTA Urban Specialist

Learn About Lotoya & How She
Can Support Your PTA on page 17

Contact Lotoya Today:
urban@nyspta.org

Get to know the dedicated leaders who serve New York's families. Each newsletter will introduce a few Governance Team members, so be sure to check future editions to meet them all.

PTA[®] Unit

Family Engagement Checklist

Use this checklist throughout the school year to assess, strengthen, and celebrate your PTA's family engagement efforts.



Welcoming Environment

- ☐ Ensure all families feel welcomed and valued, regardless of background, culture, language, family structure, or ability.
- ☐ Provide clear information about PTA membership and opportunities to become involved.
- ☐ Display welcoming signage and materials that reflect the diversity of the school community.
- ☐ Offer interpretation and translation services when needed.
- ☐ Create opportunities for families to connect with school staff and PTA leaders.
- ☐ Regularly invite and welcome new families to participate in school and PTA activities.

Communication

- ☐ Use multiple communication methods, such as email, text, social media, flyers, websites, and newsletters.
- ☐ Share information in clear, family-friendly language.
- ☐ Translate important communications into languages spoken by families in the school community.
- ☐ Provide advance notice of meetings, events, and volunteer opportunities.
- ☐ Seek feedback from families through surveys, conversations, and listening sessions.
- ☐ Communicate both successes and upcoming opportunities for involvement.

Family Participation & Voice

- ☐ Offer a variety of volunteer opportunities that accommodate different schedules, interests, and abilities.
- ☐ Provide both in-person and virtual opportunities for engagement when appropriate.
- ☐ Encourage participation beyond traditional volunteering roles.
- ☐ Invite families to share their talents, skills, cultures, experiences, and ideas.
- ☐ Provide meaningful opportunities for families to share their voice and participate in decision-making.
- ☐ Recognize and celebrate family contributions throughout the year.

Building Partnerships

- ☐ Collaborate with school administrators, teachers, and staff on family engagement efforts.
- ☐ Partner with community organizations to provide resources and services for families.
- ☐ Include family engagement goals in PTA planning and budgeting.
- ☐ Invite diverse family voices to participate in planning and decision-making.
- ☐ Recruit, encourage, and mentor future PTA leaders from underrepresented groups.
- ☐ Build ongoing relationships with families, school staff, and community partners.

Supporting Student Success

- ☐ Encourage family participation in educational events, activities, and opportunities that support student learning.
- ☐ Partner with school staff to identify family needs that may impact student success.
- ☐ Share resources that support students' social, emotional, and academic well-being.
- ☐ Consider family perspectives when developing programs and activities that support students.



Inclusive & Accessible Practices

- ☐ Ensure meetings and events are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- ☐ Consider childcare needs when planning events and meetings.
- ☐ Offer events and activities at varying times to accommodate different schedules.
- ☐ Respect and celebrate diverse cultures, traditions, and family structures.
- ☐ Create opportunities for families who may not traditionally participate to become involved.
- ☐ Regularly review PTA practices to identify and remove barriers to participation.



Annual Reflection & Growth

- ☐ Conduct a family engagement assessment.
- ☐ Review participation data from meetings, events, programs, and other engagement opportunities.
- ☐ Gather feedback from families, students, and school staff.
- ☐ Identify strengths and areas for growth.
- ☐ Develop family engagement goals for the coming year.
- ☐ Share successes, challenges, and lessons learned with the PTA membership.
- ☐ Use feedback and reflection to improve family engagement efforts throughout the year.

Our Goal: Every family feels welcomed, connected, informed, and empowered to support the success and well-being of every child.

NYS PTA Proposed Slate of Officers | 2026–2028

As PTA leaders and members begin a new year, there are many opportunities to connect not only within our local school communities, but also with the larger PTA community across New York State.

The Nominating Committee of the New York State PTA has announced its proposed slate of officers for the 2026–2028 term:



President: Sonya Verrillo



1st Vice President: Roberto Rijos



Vice President: Lissa Zukoff



Secretary: Lynn Petrofsky

In addition to the proposed slate, 2 officer positions will be open for election at the 2026 NYS PTA Convention due to vacancies that will occur following the election of officers for the 2026–2028 term.

The following positions will be filled through voting by delegates at the Annual Meeting: Vice President and Treasurer.

Members can learn more about the proposed slate, the election process, and the association's work at the 130th NYS PTA Annual Convention and Annual Meeting in Saratoga.

As we gather in Saratoga, we will celebrate the many ways PTA units, leaders, and members across New York State have put President Frazier's theme, "Measuring Our Mission for Every Child," into action. As we reflect on the work and accomplishments of her term, we also celebrate the relationships built, voices heard, and difference made in communities throughout the state. Together, we look ahead to the next chapter of NYS PTA leadership and PTA's continued work.



Join Us in Saratoga!

Join us as we celebrate 130 years of PTA in New York State and the many ways our members continue to make a difference for children, families, and communities.

Engagement Goes Beyond Events

At Family Engagement, we often talk about the importance of looking beyond event attendance when we think about meaningful engagement.

Families and members may engage by sharing their ideas, responding to a survey, volunteering, participating in advocacy, attending workshops, connecting with other PTA leaders, or taking part in the broader work of PTA.

That same idea extends beyond our local school communities.

Connecting with PTA members from other schools, regions, and communities can broaden our understanding of what is happening across New York State. Convention provides one opportunity to make those connections, learn from other leaders, and bring new perspectives home.

Whether you attend the Annual Convention, read NYS PTA communications, or simply stay informed about the work of the association, there are many ways to stay connected and be an engaged PTA member.

Stay Informed. Stay Connected. Be PTA Engaged.

Be PTA Engaged will continue to share timely NYS PTA information, resources, and opportunities that can help local leaders and members stay connected to the larger PTA community.

For information about the proposed 2026–2028 slate and the 130th NYS PTA Annual Convention and Annual Meeting, visit the official NYS PTA resources and convention information at <https://nyspta.org/events/convention>.

Learn. Connect. Participate. Bring It Home.

That is one more way we can put Family Engagement into action and remember that **engagement goes beyond events**.

Making Every Family Feel *Welcome*



Family Engagement is about more than showing up for a meeting or replying to an email. It starts with real relationships, families feeling heard, respected, and comfortable sharing what they know about their children. For families of children with disabilities, that kind of partnership can make a real difference.

Every family should feel like they belong in the school community. Some may be new to the school. Others may be getting ready for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, working through a transition, or simply looking for someone who will listen. Wherever they are, reaching out matters.

1. Make PTA events easier for everyone to participate

Think about accessibility from the start. Choose wheelchair-accessible spaces, offer a quiet area, use clear signs and visual schedules, provide flexible seating, and plan activities children with different needs can enjoy.

2. Ask families to help shape the plans

Don't wait until an event is planned to ask families to join. Find out what would make PTA programs, meetings, and events work better for them, and invite them to serve on committees, planning teams, or in leadership roles.

3. Keep useful information coming

Share local resources through PTA newsletters, social media, websites, and meetings. Families may appreciate information about supports, workshops, events, recreation programs, and advocacy groups.

4. Give families time to connect

A coffee chat, listening session, virtual meetup, or informal support gathering can give families a comfortable place to ask questions, trade ideas, and learn from one another.

5. Be thoughtful about how you communicate

Skip the assumptions and ask families what they need. Offer translated materials and accessible formats. Don't depend on only one way to communicate, take advantage of everything that is available to you, such as email, school communication, websites, and social media.

An inclusive school community doesn't happen on its own. It grows when we listen and value what each family brings. Small changes by PTA units can help children thrive and make more students and families feel that they truly belong.

By Lissa Zukoff, NYS PTA Special Education Specialist

Beyond the Event

Building Meaningful Family Engagement

As PTA leaders begin a new school year, now is a good time to consider how our PTAs can build meaningful connections with families. Events and activities are an important part of PTA, but family engagement is about more than participation. It is about building relationships, creating trust, listening to families, and making sure every family knows their voice matters.

For PTA leaders, the question is not simply, "How do we get more families to attend?" It is also, "How can we create a PTA where families feel welcomed, valued, and connected?"

Start with Small Connections

Family engagement can begin with something as simple as a conversation.

PTA leaders and members can take time to talk with families at school, during pickup, at PTA meetings, or while volunteering. Ask questions that invite conversation:

- What is working well for your family?
- What would make it easier for you to participate?
- What are your child's interests or strengths?
- Is there something you would like your PTA to know?
- How would you prefer to receive information from us?

These conversations help PTA leaders learn what families need instead of assuming every family wants to engage the same way.

Every Family Engages Differently

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to family engagement.

Some families may attend PTA meetings, volunteer regularly, or take an active role in programs and activities. Others may engage in different ways, such as completing a survey, responding to a PTA message, sharing an idea, helping with a project from home, or participating when their schedule allows. Every form of participation helps strengthen the connection between families and their PTA.

PTA leaders can create more opportunities for engagement by offering different ways to participate:

- Provide both in-person and virtual opportunities when possible.
- Offer volunteer opportunities that can be completed from home.
- Keep families informed through communication methods they use.
- Ask families for input before planning programs and activities.
- Consider different schedules, responsibilities, cultures, languages, and needs.
- Make it easy for families to share ideas, questions, and concerns.

Welcome families who are new to the school or PTA community.

When PTAs provide multiple pathways to participate, more families can find a way to connect that works for them.

Listen to Family Voices

Family engagement is a two-way relationship.

PTAs can ask families what they want and need, but the important part is what happens next. When families share their experiences, ideas, or concerns, PTA leaders should look for ways to listen, respond, and follow up.

Consider adding simple opportunities for family input throughout the year:

- A question at the end of a PTA meeting
- A short survey
- A suggestion box or online form
- A "What would you like to see?" question at an event
- Informal conversations with families
- A family listening session

Even a simple question can provide valuable information: "What is one thing you wish your PTA knew about your family?"

Try This with Your PTA

The 10-Minute Connection Challenge

At your next PTA meeting, ask board and

committee members to spend 10 minutes thinking about the families your PTA serves.

Ask:

Who are we hearing from?

Who might we not be hearing from?

What could make it easier for those families to connect with us?

Then choose one small action your PTA can take.

It might be introducing yourself to a new family, changing how you share information, offering a volunteer opportunity that can be completed from home, or simply asking families what they would like their PTA to know.

Small changes can create meaningful connections.

Make Family Engagement Part of Your PTA's Work

Family engagement should not be limited to one committee, one event, or one month on the PTA calendar. Weave it into how your PTA communicates, plans programs, recruits volunteers, welcomes families, and makes decisions.

As you plan your year, consider the 4 I's of meaningful family engagement:

- **Inclusive** – Are all families welcomed and able to participate?
- **Individualized** – Are we recognizing that families have different needs and circumstances?
- **Integrated** – Is family engagement part of our overall PTA work?
- **Impactful** – Are we listening to families and using what we learn?

Start Small. Build Relationships.

A successful PTA is about more than how many people attend a meeting or event. It is also about the relationships built along the way.

A conversation with a parent. A welcome to the new family. A survey response that leads to a change. A volunteer opportunity that works for a busy family. A family member who realizes that their voice matters.

Family engagement goes beyond events. This year, let's start with relationships.

As PTA leaders, we have an opportunity to create a PTA where every family feels they have a place, their voice is valued, and their participation can make a difference.



Strong family engagement doesn't happen by accident. It grows through intentional relationships, meaningful communication, shared decision-making, and a commitment to ensuring that every family has opportunities to connect and contribute.

The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships provide PTAs, PTSAs, schools, and communities with a framework for strengthening those connections. The six standards can serve as both a planning guide and a reflection tool, helping PTAs consider not only what they do to engage families, but also how they create meaningful opportunities for family involvement.

Here's a closer look at each standard and what it can look like in action.

Standard 1: Welcoming All Families



Families actively participate in school life and feel welcomed, valued, and connected.

Family engagement begins with creating a sense of belonging. Families are more likely to get involved when they feel genuinely welcomed and know their presence, experiences, and perspectives matter.

For PTAs, this can mean looking beyond traditional outreach and asking: Who are we reaching? Who might not yet feel connected? What barriers might be keeping families from participating?

Simple actions can make a difference,

Building Stronger Connections: The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

from welcoming new families and offering information in multiple languages to creating events where families can meet one another, school staff, and PTA leaders.

Standard 2: Communicating Effectively



Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Communication is more than sharing information. Effective family engagement creates opportunities for families to both receive information and have their voices heard.

PTAs can support this by using multiple communication methods, sharing information in family-friendly language, providing translation when needed, and creating opportunities for families to ask questions and provide feedback.

Consider whether your PTA communication is primarily one-way or whether you are creating opportunities for genuine two-way conversations.

Standard 3: Supporting Student Success



Families and school staff work together to support students' learning and healthy development.

Family engagement is ultimately connected to student success. PTAs can help families access information, resources, programs, and opportunities that support students academically, socially, and emotionally.

This might include educational programs, family workshops, resource sharing, opportunities to learn about school

programs, or partnerships that address needs identified by families and school staff.

The goal is not for PTA to do everything. It is to help connect families, schools, and resources in ways that support students.

Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child



Families are empowered to advocate for their own children and for other children.

Family engagement includes giving families the information, confidence, and opportunities they need to advocate.

PTAs can help families find resources, communicate with school staff, participate in conversations about student needs, and become informed advocates for children and their school communities.

Advocacy also means creating opportunities for families whose voices may not always be heard to participate and be represented.

Standard 5: Sharing Power



Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families.

Meaningful engagement goes beyond inviting families to attend an event or volunteer. It means creating opportunities for families to help shape decisions, programs, policies, and priorities.

For PTAs, this can include listening sessions, surveys, family forums, committees, planning groups, and other opportunities for families to contribute

before decisions are made, not simply after.

Ask yourself: Are we asking families what they think, or are we creating opportunities for their input to influence what we do?

Standard 6: Collaborating with Community



Families and school staff work with community members to connect students and families with additional opportunities and resources.

Schools and PTAs do not have to work alone. Community organizations, local businesses, libraries, service organizations, cultural organizations, and other community partners can provide resources, expertise, and opportunities that strengthen family engagement and support students.

Building these relationships can help PTAs expand what they can offer while connecting families with resources and opportunities beyond the school.

Putting the Standards into Action



The six standards are not a checklist that a PTA completes once and puts away. They provide a framework for ongoing reflection and growth.

As your PTA plans programs, communicates with families, develops partnerships, or considers new ways to involve families, use the standards as a guide. Ask:

- Are we welcoming every family?
- Are we communicating in ways that work for our families?
- Are we connecting families to opportunities that support student success?
- Are we helping families find their voice and advocate?
- Are families meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them?
- Are we building partnerships beyond our school walls?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to family engagement. What works in one school community may look very different in another. The important thing is to understand your families, listen to their voices, identify barriers, and create meaningful opportunities for connection and participation.

The National Standards can help PTAs move from simply involving families to building relationships and partnerships that make family engagement a meaningful part of the school community.

A Resource for Your PTA



The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships are a valuable resource for PTAs and PTSAs looking to assess their current family engagement practices and identify opportunities for growth.

Explore the full standards and additional resources from National PTA and consider using them as part of your PTA's family engagement planning and annual reflection.

Getting Started with the Standards-from National PTA

Get to know the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships by exploring the definitions, goals and indicators for each of the six tenets, as well as what has changed since the 2008 version.

[PTA National Standards Overview](#)

[PTA National Standards Overview \(español\)](#)

Discover what the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships look like in action and assess your own school community's implementation of PTA's National Standards.

[School Leader Rubric](#)

[School Leader Rubric \(español\)](#)

Explore National PTA's family engagement focused policy asks to learn how you can advocate for stronger family-school partnerships nationwide.

[Strengthening Family-School Partnerships through Education Policy](#)

Educate your community on the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships with our printable materials in English and Spanish.

[National Standards for Family-School Partnerships One-Pager](#)

[Los Estándares Nacionales de PTA para la Colaboración Familia Escuela Una Pagina](#)

[National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Postcard](#)

[Los Estándares Nacionales de PTA para la Colaboración Familia Escuela Folleto](#)





Family Engagement: A Pathway to PTA Membership

A Local PTA Checklist

Family engagement and PTA membership go hand in hand. When families feel welcomed, informed, valued, and connected to their school community, they are more likely to see PTA as a place where they belong and where their voice can make a difference.

Use this checklist to reflect on how your PTA/PTSA builds relationships with families and creates pathways to membership.

Start with Relationships

- ☐ Do we take time to get to know families beyond asking them to join PTA?
- ☐ Do we listen to what families want, need, and value?
- ☐ Do we ask families how they would like to participate?
- ☐ Do we make an effort to connect with families who may not traditionally participate in PTA?

Make PTA Welcoming

- ☐ Do families know who we are and what PTA does?
- ☐ Do we explain PTA in clear, family-friendly language?
- ☐ Do new families know who they can go to with questions?
- ☐ Do families see themselves and their experiences represented in our PTA?
- ☐ Do we consider language, accessibility, scheduling, and other barriers that may make participation difficult?

Create Multiple Ways to Participate

- ☐ Do we offer opportunities beyond attending PTA meetings?
- ☐ Can families participate without making a long-term commitment?

- ☐ Can families help from home or online?
- ☐ Do we offer short-term volunteer opportunities?
- ☐ Do we invite families to share ideas, skills, experiences, or resources?
- ☐ Do we recognize that participation can look different for every family?

Connect Engagement to Membership

- ☐ Do we explain how PTA membership supports children, families, and the school community?
- ☐ Do we connect membership to the work our PTA is already doing?
- ☐ Do we explain how membership gives families an opportunity to have a voice in PTA?
- ☐ Do we explain that PTA membership connects our local voices to a larger network and helps give PTA a seat at state and national tables where issues affecting children and families are discussed?
- ☐ Do we help families understand that membership strengthens the collective voice of PTA at the local, state, and national levels?
- ☐ Are we inviting families to become members throughout the year, rather than only during a membership campaign?

- ☐ Do we make joining PTA simple and accessible?

Reach Beyond the Same Volunteers

- ☐ Are we relying on the same group of families to volunteer year after year?
- ☐ Are we intentionally inviting new families to participate?
- ☐ Do we personally welcome families who have not participated before?
- ☐ Are we creating opportunities for someone to “try PTA” without immediately asking them to take on a large responsibility?
- ☐ Are we helping new volunteers build confidence and find a role that works for them?

Listen and Follow Up

- ☐ Do we regularly ask families for feedback?
- ☐ Do we let families know how their ideas or feedback were used?
- ☐ If we cannot act on a suggestion, do we explain why?
- ☐ Do we celebrate and share examples of family contributions?
- ☐ Do we use what we learn from families to improve our PTA?

Take a Closer Look: After completing the checklist, ask your PTA:

Where are we already creating strong connections with families? _____

Where do we have opportunities to improve? _____

What is one small step we can take this month to engage a new family? _____

How can we connect that engagement opportunity to PTA membership? _____

Remember

Membership is more than a number. It is an opportunity to build relationships, strengthen family voice, support children, and connect families to the work of PTA.

Membership also helps connect the voices of local families to the broader PTA network, giving PTA a stronger collective voice at the state and national levels.

Start with engagement. Build the relationship. Create the connection. Invite families to join PTA and be part of the work.



Meet Patricia Genco

NYS PTA Wellness Coordinator

Wellness is at the heart of thriving school communities, and this role supports that work across New York State. As Wellness Coordinator, the focus is on connecting local units, councils, leaders, and region directors with the tools, knowledge, and people they need to champion health, mental health, and environmental well-being for students and families statewide.

Under the wellness umbrella sit three vital specialist areas: Environment, Health, and Mental Health, working together to provide a comprehensive approach to well-being. Whether a unit is launching a new initiative, navigating a community health challenge, or simply looking for guidance on where to start, this role exists to serve as a statewide resource.

How This Role Can Support You

One of the key priorities this year is expanding availability throughout New York State. That means showing up, meeting people where they are, attending health fairs across regions, connecting with region directors, and making sure every local unit and council knows that support is just a conversation away. No unit should feel like they are navigating wellness challenges alone.

At major NYS PTA events, including the Summer Leadership Conference (SLC) and Annual Convention, workshops on timely and important wellness topics will be offered for members. These sessions bring in presenters and community partners to share research, resources, and real-world strategies that local leaders can take back to their units and put into action.

What You Can Bring to Your Unit

This role is here to help with a wide range of questions and challenges, including:

- Developing or strengthening health and wellness programs at the local level
- Understanding and addressing mental health needs in your school community
- Incorporating environmental awareness into your unit's work
- Identifying and connecting with community partners and presenters
- Reviewing and staying current on legislative initiatives and resolutions related to health, mental health, and the environment

Let's Connect

If your unit has a wellness-related question, is planning a health initiative, or simply wants to know what resources are available, please reach out. This role was created to serve you, and there has never been a better time to take advantage of the support available through NYS PTA.



Meet Kathleen Jenne

NYS PTA Programs Coordinator

It's time to talk Programs! As Programs Coordinator, it is my responsibility to oversee the [NYS PTA Programs](#) Team, working closely with our Literacy and Arts Specialists to support meaningful opportunities for student engagement across the state. Much of our work focuses on National and NYS PTA annual contests such as [Reflections](#) and [Pick a Reading Partner \(PARP\)](#). We also offer other programs such as [financial literacy](#) and the [Every Child Reads contest](#).

With Reflections providing multiple pathways for students to express themselves through the arts, PARP helping to make connections with our greater school community through fun literacy activities, not to mention all the [other amazing program opportunities](#) and guidance we offer to engage families and promote healthy minds, bodies, and environments, Programs is where it's at!

For those of you who may not be familiar with our team, I'm Kathleen Jenne and I am the Programs Coordinator for New York State PTA. A little information about me; I was born and raised on Long Island, but after falling for a North Country native, I now live in Baldwinsville (a Syracuse suburb), with my husband and our two sons. I am an educator, a bibliophile, and a history buff, so it's probably just faster to say I am a total nerd! If you don't know me yet, please reach out and introduce yourself! We'll all quickly get to know each other as we work together over this upcoming year. As I reflect on my own school days, almost every event or experience that made the best "core memories" was a program run by PTA volunteers. I want not only for my own children and students to make these memories, but for every child to have this experience.

I believe this work matters because our NYS PTA programs help students feel connected, recognized, and inspired both inside and outside the classroom. They also provide families with inclusive opportunities to engage with their child's learning in fun and meaningful ways. This year, my goal is to support our amazing Programs Team in their continuing work to create programs that provide accessible pathways to engagement for ALL New York State students. We also have many exciting announcements on the horizon, and I hope you'll join us at the Convention in November to learn more!



Meet Cindy Ames

NYS PTA Field Support Coordinator

This is my 2nd full year as a Field Support Coordinator (FSC). This year I will provide support to Genesee Valley, South Central, and Western Regions' Region Directors. I am also Interim Region Director for South Central. I'll work with the RDs to provide training to their region boards, provide advice to them with unit questions, and, if needed, help with problems that may arise.

I have been involved with PTA for 31 years at the unit level. I hail from a centralized unit in a rural school district. Positions I've held are Reflections Chair, VP, Treasurer, and President. At the region level, I served as Awards Chair, Membership Chair, Associate Director, Treasurer, and Region Director for the Niagara Region. At both levels, I served on the Audit, Budget, Bylaws, Fundraising, and Nominating committees. For NYS PTA, I was an FSC from 2016-2019 and had the honor of being asked to return to that position in December 2024. At the state, I have served on the Awards, Budget & Finance, Nominating, and Resolutions Committees.

When I started in PTA, I had some of the BEST mentors! It's my turn to pay it forward. I will help in any way humanly possible.

I have a 32-year career in accounting. Surprise! I am retired now. I often find myself volunteering with area non-profits. For the past 10 years, I have loved volunteering through the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program during tax season, doing taxes with a focus on those over 50 or who have a low to moderate income. I say this to encourage you to take advantage of this FREE program.

My husband, Doug, and I are celebrating our 40th anniversary this summer. He is a retired teacher and administrator. We have 2 really great sons. Our oldest and his wife live in North Carolina near the coast. We visit as often as possible! Our youngest is moving back to our area after spending three years in NYC and will be getting married in June 2027!

I believe the success of PTA is because of its membership! Each and every member!

I have been involved with PTA for this long because I truly believe in its mission and see us succeeding! Say it with me - PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child.



Meet Jennifer Pollock-Hurst

NYS PTA Arts Specialist

Hi! My name is Jennifer Pollock-Hurst, and I am honored to serve as the New York State PTA Arts Specialist. As a parent, former arts educator, and performer, I am passionate about creating opportunities for students to explore creativity, connect through the arts, and feel seen, confident, and a true sense of belonging.

In my role, I support arts-in-education initiatives across New York State, including programs like Reflections, helping make them accessible, inclusive, and meaningful for every student. Every child deserves a space to express who they are. Looking ahead to 2026–27, I'm excited to continue building connections, supporting our incredible PTA leaders, and expanding opportunities for students across New York State to shine through the arts.

Reflections: What My Culture Means to Me

The 2026–2027 National PTA Reflections theme is “What My Culture Means to Me.” This year’s theme invites students to explore what culture means to them and express their ideas and experiences through the arts.

As PTAs begin planning for Reflections, each region will set its own deadlines. For the most up-to-date information about deadlines and submission details, PTAs should check with their Region Reflections Chair. I am a member of the Taconic Region and look forward to supporting PTA leaders as they bring Reflections to their school communities and create opportunities for students to express themselves, celebrate their perspectives, and shine through the arts.



Meet Lotoya Anderson

NYS PTA Urban Specialist

I have spent the past 13 years advocating for better resources and opportunities in the Westchester-East Putnam region, particularly in the Mount Vernon school district. As an Urban Specialist with NYS PTA, my mission is to ensure every child has access to quality education and support, especially in urban areas and small city school districts.

My journey with PTA began when I realized the challenges families faced in accessing quality educational resources. Inspired by the resilience and dedication of parents, I became involved to help amplify their voices. What I enjoy most about serving PTA families and students is witnessing the positive impact of community engagement, seeing families come together at events and fostering an environment where every child can thrive.

In my role as Urban Specialist, I focus on building strong partnerships among parents, educators, and the community. My responsibilities include providing guidance on compliance with NYS PTA regulations, and empowering parents through educational workshops. I bring a wealth of experience in advocacy and community engagement, which I believe will enhance my effectiveness in this role.

Looking ahead to the 2026–2027 school year, I plan to focus on several key initiatives. I aim to enhance empowerment programs that educate parents about advocacy and the educational system. Additionally, I will develop comprehensive resource guides to help PTA units stay compliant and informed about best practices. Engaging families is also a priority; I hope to foster collaborations with local organizations and encourage parents to participate actively in school board meetings.

Outside of my work with the PTA, I enjoy traveling as a missionary, visiting different countries to help those in need. My most impactful mission trip was to Ghana, Africa, where I witnessed the transformative power of service. I cherish spending quality time with my family, and my two daughters are my world. Their joy and curiosity inspire me daily.

I look forward to continuing this journey with the PTA community, working together to create lasting, positive changes for our children.