



Strengthening Family-School Partnerships: A Reference Guide for PTA Leaders

The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships highlight the key tenets of effective family engagement practices that support student success and well-being. Read on to learn how you can put the National Standards into action in your work. For more resources, visit [PTA.org/Standards](https://pta.org/Standards).

Welcome All Families

- ✓ Work with the school and PTA to train staff and leaders to hold relationship-building conversations with families
- ✓ Collaborate with your school to conduct listening sessions to learn how to help families feel respected, understood and connected to the school and PTA
- ✓ Ensure that your PTA and school are tracking input and participation by key demographics, so you know who has or has not been included
- ✓ Create opportunities for families to contribute based on their time, skills and passions
- ✓ Advocate for your school to make sure that front office staff, educators, administrators, and all others are using best practices in family engagement
- ✓ Ensure that opportunities for families to participate in the PTA are differentiated for families who are not available during typical school hours
- ✓ Ask the school to allocate time and resources to audit family engagement practices around cultural responsiveness



Communicate Effectively

- ✓ Inquire about families' communication preferences and ensure that your PTA differentiates communication to families based their preferences
- ✓ Translate written and spoken communication to align with language preferences/needs of students and families
- ✓ If you gather input from families, report back to them about what you learned from them and how their input is informing specific changes to PTA and school policies and practices

- ✓ Designate an individual or individuals who are tasked with ensuring that all communication outlets utilized by families in your school community are streamlined and families know where to go for different information
- ✓ Train PTA leaders on protocols for information-sharing, family outreach, and roles and responsibilities for family communication in times of crisis and disruption
- ✓ Advocate for teachers to receive the time, training, and resources necessary to communicate with families in personalized and culturally sustaining ways

Support Student Success

- ✓ Encourage school leadership to communicate expectations and provide resources to staff for co-constructing social, emotional, and academic goals with students and families
- ✓ Provide workshops for families to build their capabilities and confidence to support their child's learning and social emotional well-being at home
- ✓ Advocate for opportunities for families to better understand, observe, and contribute to classroom learning
- ✓ Collaborate with school leaders and educators to ensure families receive a holistic assessment—using multiple measures—of their child's academic progress and social emotional well-being
- ✓ Collaborate with school leaders and educators to provide opportunities for families to practice using strategies, tools and/or resources to equip them to support their child's education
- ✓ Partner with the school to ensure families and students understand potential college and career pathways, and the planning and actions they'll need to take to access the pathway

Speak Up for Every Child

- ✓ Create and promote avenues (comment boxes, open forum time in meetings, etc.) where families can ask questions and share concerns
- ✓ Provide families with a FAQ guide with answers to common questions, contact information and general guidance
- ✓ Create the conditions for PTA leaders and families to speak about diversity, difference and systemic biases in family engagement
- ✓ Provide workshops for families to build their understanding of families' rights under federal and state laws and to build their capabilities and confidence to effectively advocate for their rights
- ✓ Encourage members from underrepresented groups to take the lead in informing, designing and implementing PTA improvement efforts



- ✓ Identify specific school personnel who can serve as a point of contact for families who need support navigating school and district bureaucracy
- ✓ Advocate for the school to audit school and district operations and adjust policies and practices that adversely impact historically marginalized students and families

Share Power

- ✓ Ensure that your PTA's calendar, programs, events and meeting structure reflect the priorities of all families and not just a vocal or involved few
- ✓ Create structures and processes for gathering input that are well-publicized and utilized by the PTA and school community
- ✓ Ask the school to disseminate data and information about school policies, practices and outcomes for student learning and social emotional well-being
- ✓ Build your PTA leadership pipeline so that fresh perspectives and diverse experiences are represented in your governance and ensure that no one PTA leader continues to hold power for too long
- ✓ Collaborate with school leaders to design decision-making protocols that incorporate the viewpoints and perspectives of families, staff, students and community constituents
- ✓ Collaborate with the school to identify and/or create opportunities for to build families' capabilities and confidence for leadership development and civic engagement

Collaborate with Community

- ✓ Ask families about issues affecting the community and how the school and PTA can contribute to community-wide solutions
- ✓ Identify potential community partners that support family and school priorities
- ✓ Build relationships with "official" and "unofficial" community leaders to learn about the needs, assets and priorities of community partners
- ✓ Invite members of community-based organizations to participate in PTA meetings so families can learn about community organizations
- ✓ Partner with the school to explore ways, like creating community asset maps, that community partners can be connected to meet families' and students' needs
- ✓ Advocate for your school to become a hub of community life through models like community schools