

PTA Do's and Don'ts of Partnering with School Administrators

(Revised May 2021)

Do:

- **Plan together.** Learn administration's mission, vision, and goals to discuss how your PTA can engage families in supporting those goals. Share PTA mission, advocacy, and organization structure with Administrators.
- **Connect to resources.** Talk with the principal about how state and National PTA programs and resources support and enhance student learning and family engagement as well as grant funding opportunities.
- **Be respectful.** You don't always have to agree but it's important to find a way to communicate in a professional and respectful manner with your school's leadership.
- **Differentiate.** Help school administration understand that your local unit is a separate and independent child advocacy group, part of and supported by a large and experienced association.
- **Meet regularly.** Consider a regular monthly coffee with the principal or arrange a regular phone call and/or virtual meeting. Invite the superintendent or school board members to board meetings to share school district information. Stay in touch with them.
- **Make the connection visible.** Ask your principal to provide a report at PTA meetings, or to write an article for your PTA's newsletter or provide social media posts for the PTA. Plan an open-to-all "chat with the principal" or "coffee with the superintendent."
- **Engage families.** Share the National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships and Family Engagement Center materials, local PTA and student programs, grants, and awards. Collaborate on building family engagement and improving student success. Consider registering for National PTA Schools of Excellence.
- **Engage community.** Invite community groups or youth-serving organizations to the school for PTA events. With the principal, identify community service opportunities for families.
- **Encourage participation in the school division's budget process.** Give parents the info they need to effectively advocate during budget time. Help parents support the education budget.
- **Stay on the same page.** Follow up all phone calls, emails, and meetings with a summary of what was discussed and confirmation of any action steps to be taken by the PTA or administration.
- **Ask to speak at staff/teacher meetings.** Ask to be treated as a partner in education, a vital part of the connection between home and school.

Don't:

- **Be adversarial.** Developing a working relationship is well worth the effort. Find common ground. Model civil discourse, even if it is difficult to deal with administration.
- **Co-mingle funds.** Mixing private and public funds is forbidden. No PTA funds should ever be deposited in a school account and no school funds should find their way into a PTA account.
- **Give up control of the checkbook.** PTA is a separate entity from the school. PTA funds are controlled by PTA members and board. The checkbook resides with the treasurer.
- **Give up control of PTA meetings.** All members—even administrators—have the same rights at meetings. The PTA meeting is run by the PTA President or the president's delegate, in compliance with PTA bylaws and using Robert's Rules.
- **Get in trouble with the IRS.** Know the rules and file the proper forms with the IRS. PTA's funds are not school funds; do not use the school's EIN. Consult your state PTA if you have questions.
- **Open your PTA to theft.** No administrator wants to deal with the negative publicity surrounding a PTA's poor money management. Use good business judgment, ensure financial reports and audits happen, and follow your state PTA's rules about money-handling.
- **Entangle administration in personality issues.** Sometimes personal issues interfere with PTA function. To maintain a professional, credible relationship with administration, work through your personal problems without involving administration. Seek help, if necessary, from your council, district, or state PTA.
- **Become an ATM.** PTA funds are raised to further PTA's mission and goals, not to supplement school budgets. Collaborate with administration, but do not allow your PTA to be viewed as a bottomless source of funding available for all administration requests. Raise awareness rather than raise funds.