

The Real Meaning of PTA



The Parent Teacher Association is a self-governing unit that plans its programs and activities to meet the needs of children and youth in the community. It is linked through its membership to the Florida and National Congresses of Parents and Teachers. Its bylaws are based on those of National and Florida .

As we begin to talk about "the real meaning" of PTA at the local level, let us first look at our Purposes:

- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community and place of worship.
- To raise the standards of home life.
- To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.
- To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth.
- To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education.

How do we, as a local unit, attempt to abide by and uphold these objects? Let's take a look at them and see.

To begin we must help parents, teachers, and other interested persons gain knowledge of the child, his growth, development and needs. It is the responsibility of each of us to educate ourselves and others to the needs of our children and youth.

The PTA has taken the lead in promoting juvenile courts, school lunch programs, transportation programs and child labor laws, to name a few. Our legislators need and want to know how we feel about these and many other things and this is one way we not only serve our school but our community as well.

Our Purposes state: To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth. Welfare of children and youth is determined in part by law and government. As a PTA, we are to remain nonpartisan. This does not mean we are nonpolitical, only that we do not support or endorse one candidate over another. We support and work for an issue - not a person. As local units, we are urged to participate in legislation. We take a stand on principles and issues --- not candidates or political parties. As individuals, we are urged to take an active part in politics. We urge members not to solicit the endorsement of the PTA or exploit his membership to promote his candidacy.

The PTA studies its own community to determine what is needed in the way of state and local legislation. When problems face a community, the PTA, working alone or with other interested organizations, may arrange public meetings to focus public attention on them and initiate intensive campaigns of public action. It is our policy to study the child and his needs, the responsibilities of parents, the influences of community and the program and aims of our schools.

To encourage and contribute whatever is needed to promote the welfare of children and youth. Local associations, **the most important part of the National Congress**, carry out their programs through work of committees - a democratic practice that enables many persons to share responsibility. Members are privileged to decide what action shall be taken and thus determine the course of action of the local unit.

Another of our Objects is to raise the standards of home life. Parents need to be kept aware of the importance of sending children to school healthy, well nourished, rested, and appropriately dressed. Parents are responsible for their children's behavior in school --- thus, we must begin their training at home. We must understand the school's rules and the reasons and importance of complying with them.

This brings us to the Purpose to bring into closer relation the home and the school that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth. The PTA should be a means of communication between the home and the school. This is one of our main functions. Perhaps, the two words that signify PTA best are EDUCATION and COMMUNICATION. We must educate ourselves and then communicate our findings to others. Only by keeping this line of communication open and active, can we expect a good understanding and relationship with our parents, teachers and community. Parents should make it their business to find out what the school is trying to accomplish through methods and curriculum; why certain subjects are included or excluded; how the grading system operates; why techniques and procedures are different from those in the past and why certain rules are established for control of conduct. Only by studying and understanding these things can we understand the school's general objectives and how we can help to achieve them.

Every parent should visit his child's school and meet his teachers. Teachers welcome and urge you to make an appointment for a conference to discuss your child...build friendly relations between parents and teachers to promote parent-teacher cooperation and avert those unhappy times when Johnny fails or misbehaves. Discussion of a problem should be done through a conference---NOT a PTA meeting. Take this time to get acquainted yourself. Just as a parent needs to understand the school and what it is trying to achieve, so the teacher needs to understand the home and its values and aspirations.

The Purpose that states to develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education comes next. We do not seek to direct the administrative activities of the schools, nor control their policies. The new ideal of the democratic school system implies that the citizens of a community have the responsibility not only to finance the schools but also to participate in determining educational goals and objectives and in building curricula that will truly meet the needs of children and youth. It is the function of the home, school, and community to settle such problems together. The PTA is a medium through which administrators, teachers, and parents may discuss educational concerns and problems impersonally and objectively work together toward solutions.

The **PTA is not a money-raising organization**, and funds for its work should not be solicited. Any money-raising projects should be for a definite purpose that furthers the Purposes of parent-teacher work. When children take part in projects, their share should be a natural outgrowth of regular school work or a constructive leisure-time activity. One project can usually be made the occasion for raising all the funds necessary to finance the year's activities of a local unit. PTAs have always provided and will continue to provide for the pressing needs of children while they work to arouse the public to its obligations. No project for a school should be undertaken without first finding out if this can and will be provided for by the school system, or if it is permissible to do it at all. The primary use of PTA funds should be to further the continuance of PTA work.

Many people ask why we attend **State Convention** and how much does it cost the local unit. As a PTA, it is up to each local unit as to how many people it sends to the convention. You do not have to send anyone if you do not wish to do so, but it is to your advantage to send as many as possible, according to Florida PTA bylaws. As PTA members, we are interested in all children and youth - not just the children in our own school. This is one of the most important reasons for belonging to PTA...for not only do we have a chance to work for our children, but for children all over the state and nation. By attending the state convention, we have an opportunity to hear from people all over our state and to find out what their problems are within their schools. The annual convention is the governing body of the Florida PTA, and the delegates adopt priority items which become the Action Platform.

The Florida PTA has a **volunteer legislative committee** that meets with the state legislators in Tallahassee and works as lobbyists throughout the legislative session for the goals that are set at our state convention. Information from this committee is sent to all local unit presidents. The PTA has Position Statements and continuing concerns, that it works for year after year, but each year it adopts an "Action Platform" which contains the items it feels are most important or need stressing the most at that time. This is adopted at convention. By helping to make up this Action Platform, we, as individuals, can help in directing our legislative committee as to what we want from our state legislators. For example, it was through the work of

the PTA that we got our textbook appropriations years ago. Our National Congress has a volunteer legislative committee that also works as lobbyists in Washington...so you see, as an individual member of a local unit; we can help further education and the welfare of children throughout our entire nation.

The **cost of convention** depends on where it is held. The Florida PTA endeavors to hold it in a different section of the state each year so that no one has to travel a long distance every year. Usually the local unit pays the expenses of its delegates to attend convention. This includes transportation, room and board. Car pools are formed so it is more economical for all. Special rates are received from hotels and members are expected to be wise in their meal expenditures. Most local units budget a certain amount for convention, and if the full amount is not needed it remains in the PTA. It does not go to delegates just because it is budgeted.

As local units, we have **bylaws** written to govern our own needs including National and Florida requirements.

We elect our own officers and they, in turn, select the needed chairmen. In the Florida PTA you will find corresponding officers and chairmen; thus, help is offered to all of these chairmen in many different ways: materials from the Florida and National offices, workshops and training courses throughout the county and state.

County council presidents and region representatives serve on the state board, and the state president serves on the National Council of States...tying all together and giving National representation to each local member.

Your membership needs active, enthusiastic participation...nothing great will be achieved in your PTA without enthusiasm. You can't stand by and listen and do nothing. The challenge, the action, and the enthusiastic participation depends on you. Your willingness to accept the privilege and responsibilities of membership in the PTA will make or break it. The enthusiasm and interest in youth encouraged our founders in the 1800's to fight for child labor laws to stop children of age 7 - 12 from working in mills. This was accomplished and also many other things during the past years...and we can, working together, do much more.



As individual members, we are the essence of PTA. We do not stand alone, but are as the mighty **OAK TREE**, the **SYMBOL** of **PTA**.

The emblem represents a definite pledge of service and protection to children and youth, and was adopted in 1920. Alice McLellan Birney, one of our PTA founders, once said, "To do my best for my children, I must do for **ALL** children, since mine enter into business and social relations with yours."