

School
**COMMUNITY
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SHARED LEADERSHIP

The Parent–Teacher
Organization



Parent–Teacher Organizations/Associations

Schools use various models of parent/family and educator groups. A Parent–Teacher Association (PTA) is typically connected to the National PTA, while a Parent–Teacher Organization (PTO) may operate independently. Whatever model the group follows or name it adopts, a written statement of purpose for the school’s parent–teacher group will be helpful in establishing common expectations, goals, and channels for regular communication.

In *Beyond the Bake Sale*, Henderson et al. (2007) assert that, when a parent group includes a “solid cross section of a school’s parent community, they can support school improvement, provide a training ground for civic leadership, and build support for the public schools” (pp. 194–195). They recommend assessing the parent group’s strength in these areas:

- The parent group is focused on improving academic achievement for all students.
- Surveys and focus groups are some of the ways that the parent association reaches out to families, builds its membership, and draws out their ideas and concerns.
- The PTA or parent organization invites the principal to report on student academic performance, review the school’s scores on the state test, and describe how the school plans to improve. (Henderson et al., 2007, p. 215)

Accomplishments of the group should be publicly recognized. A healthy school culture includes association – traditions and celebrations that bring the school community together – including time set aside for schoolwide recognition of excellence and hard work toward goals based on shared values.

Action Steps for an Effective Parent–Teacher Organization/Association:

- Develop a team of parents that have a clear understanding of the purpose of the organization
- Develop guidelines for organizing your team by having expectations of each member; include the meeting schedule, procedures for recording decisions and planning between meetings, etc.
- Connect with other committees in the school that have similar goals, for example, the School Improvement Team
- Review the school’s Parent Involvement Policy
- Develop an Action Plan that includes:
 - ◆ Objectives
 - ◆ Activities
 - ◆ Implementation plan – assign tasks so activities run smoothly
- Evaluate the work of the organization and adjust accordingly
- Celebrate accomplishments
- Share your school community’s success stories with the School Community Network by contacting us online at <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/contactus.aspx>

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs

In 1997 and revised in 2009, the National PTA set standards for parent and family involvement programs. More than 30 years of research and 100 years of practice helped develop the standards by which parent involvement/family engagement programs can excel. National PTA, in collaboration with parent involvement researchers and other national leaders, developed the standards. Nearly 100 professional education and parent/family involvement organizations, state departments of education, colleges of teacher education, and school districts endorse them. The standards clearly delineate those practices that have been shown to lead to success and high-quality parent involvement programs.

Effective parent involvement/family engagement programs include activities that are addressed by the following six standards:

PTA's National Standards for Family–School Partnerships

Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community – Families are active participants in the life of the school and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard 2: Communicating effectively – Families and school staff engage in regular, meaningful communication about student learning.

Standard 3: Supporting student success – Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard 4: Speaking up for every child – Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Standard 5: Sharing power – Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Standard 6: Collaborating with community – Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

For more information about the National Standards and PTA programs that promote family–school partnerships, visit www.pta.org.

(from *National Standards for Family–School Partnerships*, National PTA)



Resources for Shared Leadership

The following information is from *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (p. 194).

Leadership-style parent organization	Traditional-style parent organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on improving student achievement and helping families understand standards, tests, and performance data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on fundraising and recruiting volunteers to help in the lunchroom, office, and playground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varies times and places, such as meeting on weekends in an apartment complex community room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds all meetings at school, on the same weeknight each month
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans the agenda based on issues important to parents, using parent surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets with the principal to set the agenda
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates parents' ideas and concerns to the principal and school staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates the principal's message to other parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Features student work and performances at meetings and activities, and offers translation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows Robert's Rules of Order and holds meetings in English only
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invites the whole family and offers food, child care, and help with transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expects parents to feed their families, hire babysitters, and drive to the monthly meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents concrete proposals for improvement to principal and local school board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds an annual awards dinner with district staff and local officials

Henderson, Anne T., Mapp, Karen L., Johnson, Vivian, R., & Davies, Don. (2007). *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*. New York, NY: The New Press.

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