

2019–2020

Official Local PTA Leader Kit

Programs Quick Reference Guide



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Welcome to Programs

Just like you, National PTA wants all children to succeed. That is why the goal of National PTA programs is to bring families together with school staff in a way that builds relationships and supports student success, while providing information that enriches children's education and overall well-being. Make sure to check [PTA.org](https://www.pta.org) for program registration.

Family Engagement

Student and School Success

[PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#) were developed with national experts and reflect the most recent research about how parents, schools and communities can work together to support student achievement. They include the following:

- **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, two-way, 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 they 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 all 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.

Student and School Success

Just like you, National PTA wants all children to succeed. That is why the goal of National PTA programs is to bring families together with school staff in a way that builds relationships and supports student success, while providing information that enriches children's education and overall well-being.

National PTA has numerous resources available to local PTAs working with their school partners to implement these standards at [PTA.org/familyengagement](https://www.pta.org/familyengagement).

Family engagement is especially critical in the support of student learning and social and emotional development. The following programs and resources help parents and other caregivers get involved and stay involved:

- [National PTA School of Excellence](#). The School of Excellence Program supports local PTAs as they (1) assess the current state of family-school partnership at their school, (2) work with school leaders to identify a specific priority for their efforts and (3) take effective action to enhance family-school partnerships and make a substantial, positive impact on the school environment and student success. Schools that successfully demonstrate results receive the designation of National PTA School of Excellence and enjoy recognition at the local, state and national levels.
- [Take Your Family to School Week](#). National PTA's Take Your Family to School Week, encourages PTAs and school leaders across the country to open their doors to families so that they are engaged in their children's education and overall well-being. This year's Take Your Family to School Week is Feb. 11–17, 2018. Local PTAs will host family-focused events throughout the week.
- [PTA Family Reading Experience](#). PTA Family Reading Experience, Powered by Kindle, is a national effort that engages families of children in grades K–5 in fun, school-based literacy events to help them better understand reading fundamentals and give them tools to help their children become better readers. Throughout the experience, families engage in creative activities developed in partnership with reading teachers to reinforce critical literacy skills. In addition, National PTA has developed numerous activities families can do at home.
- [Parents' Guides to Student Success](#). Developed in response to the Common Core State Standards, these guides provide families with grade-specific information about the key items that children should be learning in English, language arts and math. The guides also include activities for families to do at home to support learning, as well as methods for helping parents to build stronger relationships with their child's teacher. For high school grades, the guides also provide tips for planning for college and career.
- [STEM+Families](#). National PTA's STEM Plus Families initiative increases access to STEM education and careers, especially among under-represented youth, by developing, evaluating and sharing effective ways to engage families in STEM experiences, while working with parents to improve access to STEM school and community learning environments. PTA's vision is that all students have the family and community support needed to access and pursue STEM opportunities and careers.

Health and Safety

Studies show that children’s physical and mental well-being have a significant effect on their long-term success. When children are well-rested, well-nourished, emotionally supported, and physically fit, they are more ready to learn. The goal of PTA’s health and safety programming is to be a resource for PTA leaders in partnering with schools to create safe environments that encourage healthy, safe choices and social and emotional support for all students. National PTA health and safety programs include the following:

- **Healthy Lifestyles.** Nearly one in three American children is overweight or obese. Children who are obese miss more school than others and risk devastating health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. PTA’s Healthy Lifestyles program provides family-centered education and tools to empower families to partner with schools and advocate for healthy changes around nutrition and physical activity, and to create an environment at home that supports the positive changes happening at school. National PTA partners with a number of organizations to connect you to the best resources and advocacy tools available to prevent childhood obesity.
- **Healthy Habits Program.** National PTA, National Education Association (NEA), and Lysol have partnered to educate students and families about health and hygiene both in the classroom and at home.
- **Anaphylaxis: Be Aware, Prepared and Ready to Respond:** A three-part video series is designed to help create a safer environment for children with severe allergies.
- **Safety at Home and at Play.** National PTA partnered with Safe Kids Worldwide to develop a program guide, safety lessons, and promotional tools.
- **Connect for Respect.** Bullying can happen anywhere that young people gather, including online, via text, and on social networks. Connect for Respect encourages local PTAs across the country to engage student leaders in the solution. Together, they lead conversations about how bullying is affecting their communities and develop collaborative solutions with educators, parents, concerned citizens, business leaders, advocates, and community members to build a healthier school climate, as well as more supportive student interactions.
- **Digital Safety & Citizenship.** Technology is woven into every aspect of life from learning and socializing, to gaming and shopping –the possibilities are endless. Broad access and use of technology opens up many opportunities for students–but it can also be difficult to navigate these online environments. This is why National PTA partnered with LifeLock to help parents start a dialogue about staying safe and positive online.
 - **The Smart Talk**
 - **Parent’s Guide to Data Privacy**

Arts in Education

The National PTA Reflections program is PTA's cornerstone arts initiative. It was developed in 1969 by Colorado PTA President Mary Lou Anderson to encourage students to explore their talents and express themselves. Since then, the Reflections program has inspired millions of students.

The program includes two components:

- **Reflections Awards.** Hosted at every level of PTA, these awards recognize students in grades Pre-K through 12, as well as students with special needs, for their interpretation of a theme via dance choreography, film production, literature, music composition, photography, or visual arts. National PTA recognizes awards recipients through scholarships, certificates, media promotion, and celebrations at National PTA's Annual Convention and Exhibition and during a winter exhibit at the U.S. Department of Education. The 2017-2018 Reflections theme is Within Reach.
- **Reflections Theme Search Contest.** National PTA sponsors a student-focused Theme Search Contest annually to determine a future Reflections program theme. Every fall, students submit their innovative concepts to state PTAs. Five concepts from each state are considered and National PTA announces the selected theme the following spring. The winner for the 2017–2018 school year will be selected in January 2018 and will receive \$100 from National PTA and recognition at the Annual PTA Convention.

Awards and Grants

Throughout the year, National PTA offers awards or grants to honor or support PTAs as they: **engage** families, **support** student success, **improve** the health and safety of students and families, **increase** access to arts education or **celebrate** advocacy and diversity.

National PTA is committed to promoting and encouraging many types of diversity and inclusion as part of our commitment to every child. In addition to evaluating the merits of each application, we may also consider geography, need, and other criteria to ensure a robust and diverse pool of grantees.

[To find out more about available grants, click here.](#)

STEM+ Families Active Grants

Do you want \$1,000 to host a fun, interactive STEM event for your students and families? If so, you've come to the right place! National PTA and our partners are committed to empowering families to support student success and filling a critical gap in STEM education with new grant opportunities. Click here to learn more about our grants to help you host a Math Night, Science Festival, or Tech night. Plus, we have grants offering free STEM kits and materials to your PTA.

[To learn more about STEM + Families Grants, click here.](#)

PTA Life Achievement Awards

Give the award of a lifetime - **Give the National PTA Life Achievement Award!** Give the highest honor from the nation's largest child advocacy organization to the person who daily lives out his or her commitment to children. [Complete the form](#) or call (800) 307-4782 to submit your request.

Mary Lou Anderson Grants

[The National PTA Mary Lou Anderson Reflections Arts Enhancement Grant](#) provides **\$1,000 in matching funds** to support local PTA arts projects within their school community. Funded projects will increase access to learning opportunities in the literacy, media, visual and/or performing arts for at-risk or under-served audiences. Arts projects must actively engage families and community partners to strengthen family-school partnerships.

[Apply here.](#)

Jan Harp Domene Award

The purpose of the [Jan Harp Domene Diversity and Inclusion Award](#) is to recognize PTAs that are dedicated to the needs of all families represented in their schools. The award acknowledges PTAs that develop practices that are inclusive and equal for all families and that result in positive change. Deadline to apply is March 31, 2018 at 8 pm EST (5 pm PST).

Phoebe Apperson Hearst Awards

The [Phoebe Apperson Hearst Awards](#) for innovation in family-engagement, named after National PTA co-founder Phoebe Apperson Hearst, recognizes and celebrates achievement in building effective family-school partnerships. The awards are presented to PTAs that have earned the [National PTA School of Excellence](#) designation and demonstrated outstanding success engaging families in student success and school environments. The awards are the highest honor National PTA presents for effective family engagement.

For more information about National PTA's awards and grants, visit PTA.org/Awards.

Volunteer Roles

Overview

As a local PTA/PTSA leader, you are responsible for overseeing many programs in your school and community. This is a big job, but you are not expected to do it alone! You will need to recruit a committee of volunteers to help. Volunteers will enrich your programs by bringing a variety of ideas, perspectives, connections, talents, and skills and they will make your job much easier and more enjoyable by ensuring that program tasks do not fall solely on your shoulders.

No two volunteers are alike—and there are as many different roles to play as there are personalities! Whether volunteers would prefer to roll up their sleeves in a planning meeting, help promote programs from home, or simply lend a hand at events, there is a job for everyone who wants to help. Use the following suggestions to expand your thinking about how team members can be involved in your PTA programs.

Plan

- Be sure to announce planning meetings widely, rather than relying on the same small circle of volunteers. Ask the principal to suggest parents who might be interested in getting more involved, and have your board members extend a personal invitation. You might be surprised who steps up!
- Invite a representative of the student council or student government to participate on a planning team, or ask a group of interested students to take the lead in planning a program or event with PTA support.
- Consider recruiting school staff who have a natural interest related to particular programs. For health and safety programs, for example, these might include health and physical education teachers, school nurses, kitchen staff, crossing guards, and playground monitors.
- Also, consider tapping into student groups related to the program area. For arts in education programs, for example, think about choir/band classes, dance teams or film clubs.

Promote

- PTA members who cannot make it to planning meetings might be willing to help with promotion: writing press releases, creating fliers or banners, updating the school bulletin board, making phone calls to invite parents or community representatives, or spreading the word via social media.
- Student volunteers might be willing to promote an event during morning announcements or write an article about a program's impact for their school newspaper.
- Teachers might agree to have their students make posters reinforcing program messages.

Participate

- Family members who attend events with their children might be willing to come a little early for set up, stay a few minutes after to help clean up, or give a half hour of their time to staff a membership table or collect event evaluation forms. If yours is a Title I school, the parent center is a great place to reach potential volunteers.
- If you are hosting an event in the afternoon or evening, consider contacting the local high school to identify older students who might need community service hours to meet graduation requirements.
- Do not forget to engage community members who have an interest in children and/or a specific program area. For example:
 - o Local media
 - o Representatives of local children's hospitals or pediatrician's offices
 - o School board and city council members
 - o City or county parks and recreation departments, health departments or libraries
 - o Local United Way representativesService clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, etc.)

Leadership Tips

Overview

It has been said that people work for managers, but they follow leaders. In order to lead your PTA in successful program implementation, you will need to inspire others to share your vision and get excited about the process.

Consider the following tips and resources for effective leadership:

▼ Topic	▼ Tips
Encouraging participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be flexible in meeting times, locations and formats (face to face, conference call, email), to engage the greatest number of people.• Find ways for those who cannot attend planning meetings to be heard. Distribute key questions ahead of time, and invite people to submit their thoughts via social media or email.
Facilitating effective meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and distribute an agenda for each meeting.• Keep a clock visible for all to see and reference it when you need to move on.
Communicating effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strong leader knows how to listen! Ask questions, invite discussion, and be open to new ideas.• Communicate with your team regularly and in a variety of formats (in-person, phone, email).• Consider setting up a social media site (e.g., Facebook page) where team members can keep in touch and share ideas.
Managing volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteers need meaningful tasks that match their own needs and talents.• Provide adequate support and training for each volunteer and task.• Recognize your volunteers often!
Resolving conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know your leadership style, and be aware that good leaders sometimes must adapt their style to fit the task at hand.

Develop a Plan

Effective PTA program planning is informed by the needs and desires of students, family members, school leaders, and the community. Use the [National PTA's Template Family Engagement Survey](#) to gauge how your school and PTA measure up when it comes to engaging families.

Once you have assessed your school community's needs, develop a program plan using the resources National PTA created for you:

- [Program Planning Guide and Checklist](#)
- [Template Action Plan](#)
- [Sample Budget](#)
- [Template Program Announcement Tools](#)
- [Event Registration Tool](#)
- [Sample Resource Request Letter](#)
- [Template Sign-in Sheet](#)

Promote Your Program

Use the following suggestions to kick-start your plan to promote your PTA programs and events. Also, read the [Communications Quick Reference Guide](#) for more ideas and template tools.

To Students and Families:

Use a variety of channels to reach students and families. Consider creating promotional messages and materials in multiple languages to reach all families in your school community. Consider the following:

- **Nothing beats a personal invitation!** Ask volunteers to make individual phone calls to parents of all students or targeted groups.
- **Use the school’s automated parent call system**, if available. If your school does not have a system in place, consider establishing a “phone tree” among PTA members.
- **Host a school-wide assembly** to introduce the program. Feature photos from last year’s program, if possible.
- **Include messages** in students’ morning announcements.
- **Hang posters and fliers** in visible locations, and send copies home to parents.
- **Post deadlines and reminders** on outdoor signs near student drop-off and pickup locations.
- **Post announcements and updates** on the school and/or PTA website and via social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- **Write an article** about the program for a PTA or school newsletter. Showcase the impact of prior years’ events and/or the benefits of family engagement. Ask a student to write a similar article for the school newspaper.
- **Engage “student ambassadors”** to talk positively about the program among peers.

Among Teachers and Administrators:

The more involved faculty and staff are in program planning, the more likely they will be to serve as “champions” of the program among other school leaders. Consider the following ideas to engage school staff:

- Request time at a staff meeting to present the program to teachers. Highlight the benefits of family engagement and invite their ideas about how they might encourage their classes to participate.
- Provide suggestions for how the program or event might be linked to curriculum. Ask a teacher volunteer to create a sample lesson plan and share it with peers.

In the Community:

When reaching out to potential community partners, focus on the impact of your program on students, schools, and families. Here are some ways your community can get involved:

- Local businesses might be willing to support fundraisers (for example, a local restaurant might host a “dine out” night, with a portion of receipts benefitting the program). Proceeds can help pay for refreshments or supplies.
- Other businesses might provide in-kind contributions of needed supplies or services (e.g., transportation, copying, child care, etc.). Use the [Sample Resource Request Letter](#).
- Work with school officials to customize media releases to invite local coverage. Do not forget smaller, local media outlets such as neighborhood association blogs and newsletters.
- Community bulletin boards can be good places to post program fliers—this can help you reach parents who are not often at the school building.

Evaluate

With so much to do, it might be tempting to skip the wrap up and jump right in to your next program or event. Keep in mind though, that the time you spend on these final tasks will pay off when next year rolls around, supporting stronger relationships, smoother planning and more successful events!

Evaluation is a critical part of wrapping up your program. It is important to understand what worked and what did not so that you can plan for an even more successful program next time. It is important to consider your evaluation strategy early in the process because data should be collected throughout the program, not just at the end.

In the simplest terms, you will need to measure three things:

- Did you reach your desired participation numbers?
- Did you do what you said you were going to do?
- Did it make a difference?

To answer the first and second questions, you simply collect information about your activities. What program events were held? How many families attended? You may want to gather all of the program information in a binder for future use (e.g., samples of all materials used, names and contact information for guest speakers, number of volunteers and hours needed, budget, etc.). You might also track program promotion strategies, for example, the number of local media hits promoting your program and resources (if applicable), or social media and website hits.

Looking at what you did is important, but it does not tell the whole story. To answer the final question, you need to look at program outcomes. How satisfied were participants? What did families learn? How will they apply what they learned?

Some strategies to gather this information include:

- **A simple parent satisfaction survey.** These can help your planning team gather more information about how attendees felt about the program. Did they understand the activities? Do they feel the information provided was useful? Will they continue to apply the strategies they learned at home? Will they come to another PTA family event?
- **Pre- and post-event knowledge surveys.** Used to assess more accurately what family members learned from a program, these are also important when reporting grant results or applying for grants in the future.
- **Phone surveys.** You have the benefit of building stronger relationships with program participants and providing the most detailed information. However, phone surveys are very time consuming. It is only feasible to talk to a small number of participants in this much depth.

[Access PTA's sample Program Evaluation Tools](#)

Another evaluation approach is to hold a debriefing meeting with your planning team to consider how successfully your PTA implemented the program. How might you improve?

Next Steps

Share Your Success

Another way to celebrate is to promote all the great results through your school and PTA communications. Seeing photos from the event reminds families of their positive experience and the impact PTA has on their school community. Share those photos with others in the PTA network so that we can highlight your results! Contact your state PTA or email your photos and best practices to programs@pta.org so that we can highlight your PTA in one of our nationally distributed communications.

Recognize Partners and Volunteers

One of the last program tasks is to thank those who helped make it a success. Be sure to include all of the following groups:

- Family member volunteers
- Students
- School personnel
- Sponsor representatives (if your PTA received a [grant](#))
- Businesses that provided donations (send an acknowledgment letter for tax purposes)
- Other community partners

Access sample thank you letters including one for [Sponsors/Donors](#) and one for [volunteers](#) in this guide.

Plan for Next Year

It is never too early to begin planning for next year. Within a week or two after your program concludes, take a few minutes to:

- Note the dates for next year's program on your PTA planning calendar.
- Make sure the program is included in your PTA's budget planning process for the next school year.
- Track the budget amount and number of volunteer hours required to complete this year's program to help next year's chairperson plan realistically.

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