

PTA communications and public relations should help PTA members and the general public understand PTA is

- A volunteer association of parents, teachers, students and other concerned citizens; and
- An action-oriented association working for the well-being of children and youth.

PURPOSES OF PTA PUBLICATIONS

- Encourage and highlight involvement with the child in the home and in the school.
- Inform every family in the school of the aims and accomplishments of the unit.
- Encourage attendance at PTA meetings, and parent involvement in PTA projects and activities.
- Foster cooperation with the school in keeping parents informed about school functions, regulations and/or procedures on child-related issues.
- Inform the community about PTA activities and school functions.
- Express appreciation to those participating in or contributing to programs.

PTA PUBLICATIONS

- Adhere to PTA noncommercial, nonpartisan and nonsectarian policies (Background for Communications 6.2.2 and Basic Policies for All PTAs 1.3).
- All material is to be cleared with the PTA president and school principal before publication. The principal is responsible for the accuracy of school information and compliance with the State Education Code and school district policy. The PTA president is responsible for the accuracy of PTA information and compliance with PTA policies.
- Never present material critical of any individual or group. To do so may very well expose the PTA to a libel suit.
- Incorporate the statewide theme – “everychild. onevoice.” – and PTA logo in communications. This will show a unity of effort and purpose, as well as demonstrate participation in a national organization.
- Avoid publishing the last name and telephone number of a volunteer who handles PTA funds.
- Only publish a summary of actions taken from the PTA association meeting.
- Do not publish, without written permission, personal information about students or adults. This includes:
 - Photographs of students or adults (with/without first or full names);

- Home addresses and/or telephone/cell phone numbers of students or adults;
 - E-mail addresses of students or adults;
 - Student or adult class schedules (e.g., “Artwork by John L., 3rd grade”).
- Date all materials.
 - Always make it easy for the reader to identify and find the Publications Coordinator. List the following items:
 - Name of the unit, council or district PTA;
 - Contact information (units should use school address; council and district PTA should use office or mailing address);
 - Names of PTA levels to which one belongs (council and district PTA, California State PTA, National PTA);
 - Most important, include an e-mail address and telephone number so that one can be reached for more information about the association.
 - Refer to the *California State PTA Toolkit, PTA Style Guide* (Forms, Chapter 9) for correct PTA terminology and formatting.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING CONTENT

- Feedback is necessary to check whether publications are achieving their goals. Take an opinion poll or use an online survey tool to discover the information that is most useful to members. Insert a questionnaire in several issues.
- Encourage others to contribute to publications. Tell them how much space is available for articles. Offer suggestions to assist them in their efforts.
- Be on the alert for coming events that should be publicized. Go after stories.
- Look for stories.
- Report the results of events, publicize membership campaigns, or announce PTA award recipients.
- Remember, people do not read, they skim. Make sure the message is easy to find. Keep things brief and to the point.
- Strategically use photographs, bullets, quotes, charts, and graphics.
- Graphic design (both print and electronic) should be clean and simple. Avoid using too many graphics or different type fonts that overwhelm the reader and distract from your content.
- Have at least two people proofread everything!

TRANSLATING MATERIALS

- PTAs must work closely with the school to meet the language needs of all who receive publications. Check with your principal whether state law requires material to be translated.
- To translate information and materials, seek help from bilingual parents on the executive board, teachers or support personnel in the classrooms or the school district, or the foreign language departments at local high schools, community colleges and universities.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS

- Develop a plan to reach all members whether they are on- or off-track.
- Time newsletters and fliers to be sent home right before track goes off and right before track returns.

APPLYING THE NONCOMMERCIAL POLICY

Offer businesses sponsorship instead of accepting advertising. Use of advertising in PTA publications is strongly discouraged, although not forbidden.

- Some school districts do not allow advertising in print or electronic media. Check with the school principal.
- Advertising may generate taxable income.

The California State PTA strongly advises the use of a disclaimer:

The mention of any business or service in this publication does not imply an endorsement by the _____ PTA.

Become familiar with the noncommercial policy (Noncommercial Policy 1.3.1).

The noncommercial policy should be applied with good judgment, discretion and common sense. Recognize that it is not meant to prohibit all contact, cooperation, or partnerships with commercial businesses.

Avoid exploitation by individuals, businesses, and others who would use their inclusion in PTA material to further their own causes.

ACKNOWLEDGING ASSISTANCE

Thank funders and sponsors. One sentence should do it.

“The Sunshine PTA newsletter/flier/brochure is printed/posted courtesy of John Doe Printers.”

“The Sunshine PTA expresses grateful appreciation to John Doe Hardware for making this publication possible.”

“The Sunshine PTA expresses grateful appreciation to the following merchants for making this publication possible:

John Doe Hardware
Mary Green Fabrics
Romano Pizza”

Acknowledge donations of TV, radio, website assistance and public service announcements if its is no further obligation.

“The Sunshine PTA thanks the Recycling Center for their work with our students on the *Let’s Do It! Recycling Program.*”

“The Sunshine PTA expresses thanks to Neighborhood Bank for the use of its parking lot for the car wash.”

“The Sunshine PTA wishes to thank KXYZ for the PTA membership promotion ads aired during our membership enrollment.”

PROMOTING FUNDRAISING

Be sensitive to your members’ attitudes toward promoting fundraisers. It is acceptable to publicize a local pizza restaurant that has agreed to donate a percentage of its sales for a specific evening.

“Sunshine PTA thanks Romano Pizza for the generous offer to donate 10 percent of all sales on May 5, 2012.”

Collecting receipts and labels (such as box tops) for PTA projects may require acknowledging certain commercial interests. Be as generic as possible.

“Sunshine PTA will collect soup labels/cereal labels for the next semester. Call Jane Doe at 213.976.4567 for information.”

COPYRIGHT LAWS

PTA members expect those who publish their newsletters, printed materials, and websites to abide by the copyright laws and to republish articles and reproduce art in an ethical manner.

Following are some simple rules regarding the use of articles and art that editors should observe:

- Sharing computer software violates federal copyright laws.
- Permission should be secured to republish anything from another source. Does the publication or the art have a small © on it with a name indicating the holder of the copyright? Permission may be requested by letter or, if time is short, by telephone, with a follow-up letter.
- The letter of request (Sample Request for Use of Copyrighted Material Fig. 6-1) or a record of the telephone call to the originator should be kept on file. The reply or a record of it should be kept on file. Print out a hard copy of any “granted” permission received via e-mail.
- Only a brief part of a written work may be quoted. This can be quoted only once, unless a new request is sent. Credit must be given to the source of the material.
- If it is impossible to secure permission before use, a PTA publication, as an educational publication, may use only brief quotes or a short section of an article. As a matter of ethics, a letter of request should be sent, even though it may be after publication.
- Laws are strict in the case of items that are creative in nature (e.g., art, literature, poetry, cartoons, and comics). Secure permission in advance in such cases. Poetry is considered public domain material 52 years after the year of copyright.

- California State PTA articles and artwork may be used by unit, council and district PTAs without permission. Read National PTA materials carefully to determine when permission to republish is required.
- Always credit the source.

NONPROFIT MAILING PERMITS

To mail newsletters and printed materials, consider applying for the nonprofit bulk mailing rate. Complete the appropriate United States Postal Service application. Be sure to follow the post office rules, which include indicia and return address placement, and address label space. This information can be obtained at the post office or online at www.usps.gov. (Nonprofit Mailing Permits 6.2.4). Determine the packaging and rate requirements. Council PTAs, and district PTAs without councils, can obtain a bulk rate permit for member units' use. Contact the council PTA to configure the address section correctly and determine the process required to pay for the mailing. Commercial mailhouse service may be another option if mail quantities exceed 500. Obtain three bids.

NEWSLETTERS

Printed newsletters

The number of pages should add up to an even number divisible by four. Try to have a graphic element on each page, using art or type. Avoid using too many graphics or type fonts.

Newsletters may be photocopied on school equipment, with permission, and the PTA should pay for the paper and ink or toner used.

Newsletters may be copied at the school district office for a fee.

Newsletters may be copied at a copy shop, after getting the best of three bids for the same print job.

Newsletters should be converted to an electronic Portable Document Format (PDF) before sending to a copy shop. The file can be e-mailed or given to the shop on a DVD. Be sure to let the shop know the number of copies, color of paper, folding, stapling, or any other instructions.

If the newsletter is given to the copy shop only as a paper copy, be sure the type and art is "camera-ready," which means the type and images are as clear as possible. Photographs do not always copy well.

Allow the copy shop enough time to do the job and still allow for the time needed to mail or distribute the newsletter, especially if the publication has information for an upcoming event.

E-NEWSLETTERS

Obtain a PTA unit e-mail address. E-mailing services can be cost-effective and an efficient way to share information with the membership. A number of online providers allow mass e-mails.

When sending an e-newsletter, use a PDF format or an e-newsletter service. (Sample e-newsletter Fig. 6-2).

If the PTA has a website, the e-newsletter is an easy way to promote the site and generate new users. Keep the e-newsletter brief, provide short summaries of new information available

on the site, and include links to the specific pages being discussed. This allows the reader to get a preview and jump to the site easily.

FLIERS AND BROCHURES

Fliers are a good way to publicize upcoming events while brochures tell prospective members about the PTA. When creating either, remember less is more. Keep the text short and straightforward, and keep the design clean and simple. Use bullets to create white space.

Select graphics for both carefully. When designing a print publication, reduce clutter as much as possible. Do not feel the page must be completely filled.

If you are using a flier to publicize an event, be sure to include:

- Title;
- Name and address of the location;
- Day, date and time;
- Host, co-sponsors, and important attendees;
- Brief description of the purpose of the event; and
- Telephone number or e-mail address to RSVP.

When creating brochures, it is helpful to include a reply card. Reserve a panel of the brochure to allow people to easily ask for more information or become members.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Williams, Robin; *The Non-Designer's Design Book: Design and Typographic Principles for the Visual Novice* (Berkeley: Peach Pit Press, 1994).

MEDIA COORDINATOR RESOURCES

Review www.capta.org and www.pta.org and subscribe to California State PTA's and National PTA's numerous electronic subscriptions.

Subscribe to print versions of *PTA in California*, *The Communicator* and *Our Children* (Resources and Subscriptions in the Introductory section of the *California State PTA Toolkit*). The cost of PTA subscriptions is a legitimate PTA expense.

Grammar guide, dictionary, thesaurus, *California State PTA Toolkit*, National PTA publications and guides.

Follow council or district PTA guidelines and attend workshops for media chairmen.

As a new media coordinator, gather all available information from predecessor. Review past issues. Study newsletters and websites from other units. Secure samples from council or district PTA (Online Communications 6.2.5, and Print Communications 6.2.6).

Include the cost of materials – paper, ink, computer software, and postage in the unit budget.

Set publication due dates, and stick to them. Advise contributors of the due dates frequently. Ask the PTA president to

include the items “article assignments” and “material due dates” on all meeting agendas.

Encourage officers and chairmen to share information about their projects, and urge them to contribute short articles and reports for the newsletter. Advise all potential contributors that material will be edited for space and form (grammar, punctuation, spelling and accuracy of information) before publication.

California State PTA materials may be reprinted: credit the source. Read National PTA materials carefully to determine when permission to reprint is required. Observe copyright laws by obtaining permission to reprint all non-PTA materials (Sample Request for Use of Copyrighted Material 6.2.2c; Fig. 6-1).

Send copies of the newsletter to council and district PTA presidents.

The California State PTA newsletter editor would also appreciate receiving a copy (communications@capta.org). Leave several copies in the school office. Save a good clear copy of each issue for the publicity record book. Leave two or three copies of each issue in the Media Coordinator procedure book.

Keep a well-organized procedure book, including the following information, for the next coordinator:

- Number of issues or postings
- Months issued
- Beginning date
- Copy deadline for newsletter, e-newsletter
- Number copies needed
- New newsletter volume number and the date that begins
- Type of duplicating process used

Materials and printing supplies

Where purchased

Amount purchased

Cost of materials

Supplies on hand

Distribution method

For print medium: U.S. Postal Service regulations and mailing permit information, if mailed

For electronic medium: Internet service provider, e-mail account names and passwords, Webmaster name and address

Council and district PTA publication chairman contact information

NECESSARY INFORMATION

PTA's history; Purposes of the PTA, Mission Statement of the California State PTA; California State PTA Core Values; California State PTA Legislation Platform; Basic Statements About Current Issues, and the PTA's basic policies, procedures, and programs (*Toolkit* chapters 1, 3, 4 and 6).

PTA Style Guide (*Toolkit*, Forms, Chapter 9)

Current PTA information, publications, names, address, telephone numbers, and e-mail address of PTA officers and chairmen, and schedule of events.

Helpful tools: fax machine, computer with Internet access, scanner, and publishing software.

10/2010