

How to effectively involve students

From the grass roots of our local PTAs to National PTA, students are a vital part of our organization; bringing enthusiasm, energy, fresh ideas and focus to issues that affect them and their communities.

Students of all ages are eligible to join any PTA or PTSA and are given the same privileges and responsibilities as any other member of the association. Students work together with parents and teachers as a team; developing skills as advocates and community leaders. The California State PTA encourages and supports student participation in PTA/PTSA leadership, events and programs at every level of PTA – unit, council, district, and state.

Students are key to a successful PTSA. Students play a valuable role and offer significant insight into the issues facing today's middle- and high-school age students and are eager to be involved in implementing positive change. Inviting students to join PTA/PTSA is an excellent way to encourage their support and participation as stakeholders in their school community. An effective collaboration of students and adults helps to ensure that PTA/PTSA programs are relevant and serve the needs of the students and the school community.

- **Survey.** For example, ask students if they:
 - feel safe at school;
 - are concerned about the availability of nutritious foods on campus;
 - receive resources they require for special needs;
 - feel engaged in the classroom; and
 - understand what is being taught.
- **Discuss.** Invite all students on campus to an informal gathering. Go over the results of the student survey. Discuss their needs. Inform students that PTSA involvement is not about fundraising. Emphasize PTA's long history of advocacy and legislative activities on behalf of youth.
- **Collaborate.** Encourage student involvement in PTA as an effective way to bring about positive change. As PTSA board and committee members, students work with adult members to ensure that PTA programs are relevant and address the needs of students and their school.
- **Networking.** If there are several PTSAs in your area, organize a student network. Your council or district PTA may be able to offer assistance with this. Students working together throughout a community can have tremendous impact on issues and awareness. Invite your superintendent to one of these network meetings. He or she will be impressed with the commitment and the energy demonstrated by the students.
- **Recognize.** Appreciate the work that your officers and members do. Congratulate them in the PTSA newsletter. Ask the editor of the student newspaper for a brief space to celebrate PTSA activities. Purchase an advertisement in the yearbook to honor and recognize PTSA accomplishments.

Ask what they:

- like most about their education;
- like least about their education; and
- would like to see changed.

