

Special Edition



The Value of PTA Membership

PTA connects families and schools. By joining PTA you show your children that school matters, and that you are invested in their success. Three decades of research proves that students achieve higher grades, have better attendance and more consistently complete homework when parents are involved—and just the act of joining PTA is a great way to get involved.

PTA also helps ensure that parents have a seat at the table when important decisions that affect schools are made. And PTA works together to improve the education, health and safety of all children.

Why PTA?

There are other types of parent groups out there, but there is only one PTA! Here are just a few benefits of belonging to PTA:

- **Get Connected.** There's no better way to know what's happening in your school, or to develop a relationship with your child's teacher and principal.
- **Discover Great Resources.** The PTA offers a variety of programs and materials for students, parents, families, schools and communities.
- **Speak Up.** PTA gives you a "seat at the table" when important decisions are made about your child's school.
- **Be a Role Model.** By becoming a PTA member, you demonstrate to your child the importance you place on education.
- **Enjoy Extra Benefits.** PTA members enjoy exclusive member perks including discounts on school supplies, rental cars, amusement parks and more.
- **Make a Difference!** By working together, PTA members have helped advance local, state and national laws and policies to improve the education, health and safety of all children.

Join PTA!

Add your voice to the more than 800,000 parents, educators, students, community members and other caring adults who are committed to positively impacting the lives of all children. Talk to your local PTA or visit www.capta.org to learn more about how you can join PTA and help stand up for children!

capta.org

What parents need to know this school year

Six key tips for all parents

Millions of children throughout California are back in school. Well-informed, engaged parents make a vital difference in helping students and schools succeed. When families, schools and communities work as partners, student achievement is boosted and children are better prepared to lead happy and productive lives. As the 2014-15 school year gets into full swing, California State PTA shares six key tips all parents need to know this school year.



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1 It starts with attendance.

Children need to be in school to learn – it's that simple. If children don't show up for school regularly, they miss out on developing fundamental skills. Data shows children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are far less likely to read proficiently at the end of third grade. Parents and families are essential partners in making sure students attend school, and play a key role in identifying the barriers to attendance as well as what motivates students to go to school. **For more information** on the importance of school attendance, check out the new [toolkit](#) from [Attendance Works](#).

2 Support learning at home.

Parents are their children's first teachers and are key in creating a home environment that helps a child succeed. Families can help children develop good study habits and attitudes that lead to becoming lifelong learners by having a special place where children can do their homework and by setting a "regular time and place" to study. Parents can also ask questions about school activities. Ask "what are three new things you learned today?" rather than "how was school?" Engage in educational conversations by turning ordinary time together into "teachable moments." Provide children access to books, magazines and newspapers as well as art supplies such as crayons, markers and colored paper either in your home or through a local library or community center. Also, limit access to TV, computer and video games. **Download** "Ten ways to support learning at home" from PTA's School Smarts Parent Engagement Program to learn more.

3 Understand the important link between health and student achievement.

Active and well-nourished children have better attendance, stay in school and are ready to learn. Ensuring your child has a healthy breakfast and plenty of exercise is a great place to start. Oral and general health check-ups are also important. Adolescents with poorer general health are less likely to graduate from high school on time or attend college. Chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, obesity and tooth decay affect about 20-30 percent of children in California, which leads to more absenteeism and lower school performance. [Team California for Healthy Kids](#), an initiative of the California Department of Education, provides additional resources on the connection between health and learning.

4 Establish a relationship with your child's teacher. Working together, parents and teachers give kids their best chance to learn. Establishing a relationship and open channels of communication with your child's teacher is a must. Attending your school's back-to-school night is one opportunity to meet and talk with your child's teacher – but building a relationship should be year-round. Understand how information will be shared and how you can be informed about assignments. Ask if the school has an online portal for checking grades and staying up-to-date on classroom information. Your child's teacher can also tell you how much time he or she expects students to spend on homework. Ask your principal, school site council or PTA if your school or district has a homework policy, including how to handle homework if your child needs to be absent. California State PTA takes a strong stand in support of homework quality by passing a resolution titled, "Homework: Quality Over Quantity." [Learn more](#) about this newly adopted resolution.



5 Learning in the classroom will look different with the implementation of Common Core State Standards.

California is updating the way we prepare students for the future. We don't know what tomorrow's jobs will be, but we know that our future depends on a strong workforce in which critical thinking and problem-solving skills can be applied in any context. That's the idea behind the Common Core State Standards; they are guidelines that will help schools focus on deeper, richer learning to prepare all students for college and the 21st century workforce. As part of the transition to new standards, California will also implement a new testing system, called Smarter Balanced, which will evaluate student achievement in a more meaningful way by leveraging technology that tailors questions to responses. **To learn more** about what your child will be learning in each grade level, check out PTA's [Parents' Guide to Student Success](#).



6 Get engaged: Your voice matters in school decision making. The new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) offer an historic opportunity to usher in a new era of greater parent and family engagement in our schools. Parents have a seat at the table when important decisions are being made at your child's school and in the school district – and there are opportunities for you to have a voice and get engaged! [Learn more](#) about how the LCFF and LCAPs work at www.capta.org/lcff. You can also take a deeper look at each of the eight state priority areas in California State PTA's [LCAP Quick Guides](#).

Help your student get the most out of



Parents and families play an important role in the homework process. Together, families can help children develop good study habits and attitudes that lead to becoming lifelong learners. Your job is not to do the work for them, but to provide support, encouragement and ask questions that help them arrive at the answers themselves.

Some things to ask about homework

Your child's teacher can tell you, usually at back-to-school night, how much time he or she expects students to spend on homework.

Your child's teacher may have a website or other resource that posts homework assignments.

Your child's school may have an online grading system, which allows parents to check their child's grades, attendance and homework status on a daily basis. This can be an invaluable source of information that allows you to keep on top of any issues before they become problems.

Ask your principal, school site council or PTA if your school or district has a homework policy, including how to handle homework if your child needs to be absent. Make sure you and your child know and understand this policy.

Why do teachers give homework?

Teachers use homework:

- To help students understand and review the work that has been covered in class.
- To see whether students understand the lesson.
- To help students learn how to find and use more information on a subject.
- To teach responsibility and routine.

How much time should my child spend on homework each night?

Most educators agree:

- For children in grades K-2, homework is more effective when it does not exceed 20 minutes each school day.
- Older children, in grades 3-6, can handle 30-60 minutes a day.
- For kids in middle and high school, 2 hours of homework may be assigned.

However, homework time and strategies can vary from teacher to teacher and school to school.

Homework Resolution

Last May, California State PTA Convention delegates adopted a new resolution entitled, Homework: Quality over Quantity. Convention resolutions call attention to a problem and a need for action on a particular issue. Delegates voted to resolve that PTAs will:

- Promote the design of meaningful homework that will advance a spirit of learning with a focus on quality assignments to motivate students based on grade and ability;
- Advocate that teachers, schools and districts follow evidence-based guidelines regarding the time expected to be spent on homework and how it impacts family interaction, and the balanced life of the whole child;
- Urge school districts to create or revise homework policies that take into account the diversity of socio-economic circumstances, languages spoken at home, educational background of parents, and other considerations that impact children's successful completion of homework; and lastly,
- Encourage all PTAs in California to work with school boards and district administrators to review current homework policies to make sure they address quality, quantity and equity concerns based on current research, and to adopt homework guidelines where none exist.

California State PTA has also submitted this resolution to the National PTA for consideration as a nationwide resolution.

Easing Transition: Tips for Parents of Students with Special Needs

A new school year means a new grade, new teachers, new goals, and maybe even a new school. In order to help you and your child be successful, here are a few helpful back-to-school tips to make the transition easier.

- **Visit the new school site with your child.** Point out the bathrooms, the cafeteria, office, playground, etc. Older students may benefit from printed maps with time schedules. Talk to your child about exciting new classes, activities and events he or she can participate in.
- **Help your child reconnect with schoolmates.**
- **Review Individual Education Program (IEP) goals.** Ensure the goals are still relevant and note the date of the annual review. Remember, you can request an IEP review anytime.
- **Connect with the teacher.** Write a brief introduction about your child (including a photo) with his or her likes and dislikes, social/emotional set-offs, motivators, methods of communication, pertinent medical information and any other important information. The more proactive and honest you are, the better teachers and school staff will be able to meet your child's needs.
- **Help plan an ability-awareness training.** If your child is in a general education class, consider helping to plan an ability-awareness training with the class. Make sure to get buy-in from your child first. Write a story for the other kids so



they can understand what makes him or her unique, and things that may be difficult for your child.

- **Keep paperwork organized.** Create a family calendar of school events, special education meetings, conferences, etc.
- **Continue learning.** Stay up-to-date on special education news and legislation, so you can advocate for your child, and all children.
- **Create a communication log.** This will help ensure you and school staff are on the same page. Be sure to note the dates, times and nature of the communications you have.
- **Attend school events when possible.** School events such as open house, back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences offer a great opportunity to meet staff and other students/families.
- **Offer to help – either in the classroom or at PTA-sponsored events.**

Additional resources for parents

For additional information about PTA's work to advance education and support the concerns of students with special needs, visit <http://www.capta.org/section/s/parents/special-needs.cfm>.

Additional information

is also available from the California Department of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/>.

Do you have ideas or suggestions to support students with special needs?

Contact:

California State PTA
Special Needs Committee at
specialneeds@capta.org.

Transition can be challenging. Hopefully these tips will help you and your child ease right into a successful school year!

Teaching kids how to handle bullying

What is bullying?

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

■ An Imbalance of Power:

Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.

■ Repetition:

Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Bullying can leave lasting emotional scars on a child. Children who know what bullying is can better identify it, talk about it, safely stand up to it and know how to get help.

Here are a few tips from stopbullying.gov you can share with your children about how to handle bullying:

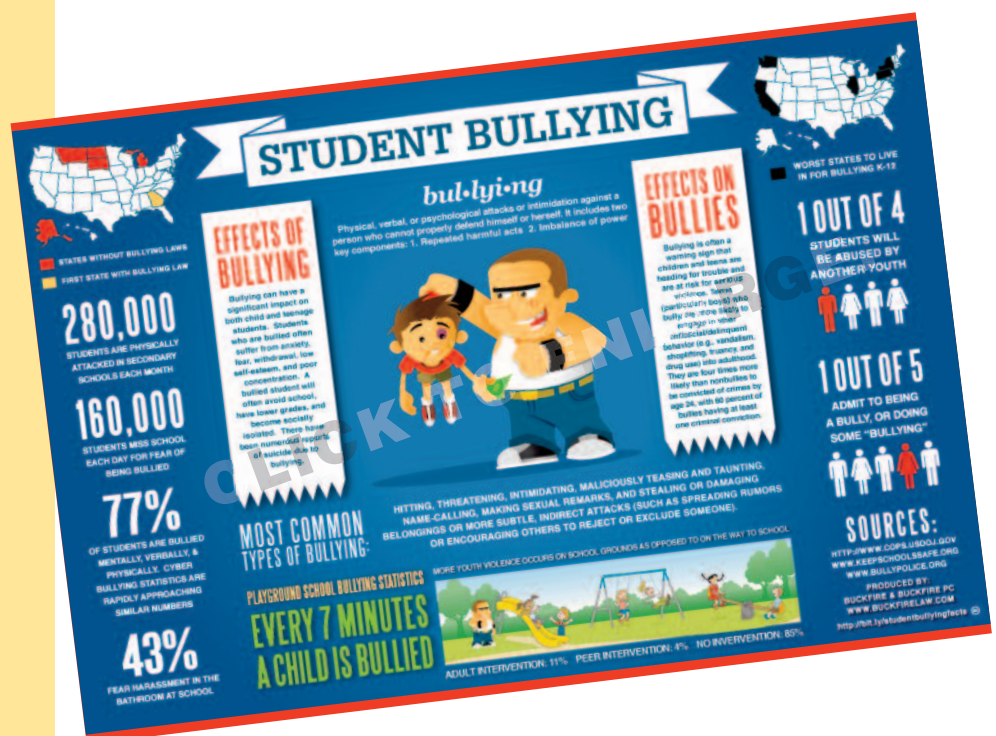
- Look at the student bullying you and tell him or her to stop in a calm, clear voice. Try to laugh it off. This works best if joking is easy for you. It could catch the student bullying you off guard.
- If speaking up seems too hard or not safe, walk away and stay away. Don't fight back. Find an adult to stop the bullying on the spot.
- Talk to an adult you trust. Don't keep your feelings inside. Telling someone can help you feel less alone. They can help you make a plan to stop the bullying.
- Stay near adults and other students. Most bullying happens when adults aren't around.



What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites.

Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles.



Healthy snacks for home and school

Smart snacking is a great way to meet daily nutrient requirements that may be missed at mealtimes. Children may need snacks to help them get enough calories (energy) throughout the day. Choosing healthy foods that add nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, to their diet is essential.



The Dairy Council of California offers six snacking tips for parents:

- 1** Plan ahead and **buy healthy snacks when you grocery shop** – you will save money and will make healthier choices than buying snacks on the go.
- 2** **Provide kids with choices** and make the choices you offer reasonably nutritious.
- 3** **Pre-portion your child's snacks** into small bags to grab on the go or put a snack-sized serving on a plate.
- 4** **Designate an area in your refrigerator or cupboard for healthy snacks** that you have selected and your kids like – let them help themselves without having to ask for permission.
- 5** **Combine snacks from at least two food groups** to pack more nutrients into your child's diet – it will be more filling and will hold them over until their next meal. For example, adding milk to cereal or serving string cheese with whole-wheat crackers or fruit is an easy way to add calcium, protein and other important nutrients to snacks.
- 6** **Space snacks far enough away from mealtimes** so appetites are not spoiled.

Visit HealthyEating.org for free tips, interactive nutrition assessment tools, meal suggestions and more.

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California State PTA works to promote effective health education programs in schools and communities that offer children, youth and families skills to make healthy choices.

For more information about PTA health initiatives and advocacy efforts, visit <http://www.capta.org/sections/programs/health.cfm>.

Also, be sure to follow California State PTA on Pinterest at <http://www.pinterest.com/californiapta> for healthy snack ideas and resources.

Pinterest

Learn more — get engaged!

Here are a number of great resources to learn more and to get engaged:

- Your local school district's website – A good place to start to learn about your school district's LCFF and LCAP timeline and process as well as programs and services at your school. Be sure to look at the School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs) that must be posted for each school to understand where your students and district stands now.
- [EdSource.org](#) – Offers a guide to the LCFF along with news and information about California K-12 finance system. EdSource also offers an LCFF Tracker to investigate the implementation of the LCFF at various school districts across California.
- [Ed100.org](#) in partnership with California State PTA – California's education system 100% demystified. California's education system is changing fast. Learn how it really works, so you can make a difference.
- California State PTA – Informational videos, fliers and more in multiple languages available to PTAs and all parents at [www.capta.org](#). Be sure to also check out the [PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide](#) as you work with your school leaders in the development of family engagement goals and activities.

Get Engaged: Your Voice Matters in School Decision Making

This school year, your voice as a parent is more important than ever! With California's new school funding law, called the [Local Control Funding Formula \(LCFF\)](#), your school district is required to involve parents in planning and decision making to focus on student success. It also:

- Requires your school district to focus on the eight key areas that help all students succeed.
- Provides extra funding for students with greater challenges.
- Gives your district more flexibility for how to spend its money to improve local schools.

As a critical component of the new LCFF law, every school district must engage parents and the community to create a [Local Control and Accountability Plan \(LCAP\)](#). The LCAP is intended to be a comprehensive planning tool.

Each school district's LCAP must focus on eight priority areas that help all students succeed. These eight priority areas reflect PTA's belief that many factors – both inside and outside the classroom – positively impact student success. Each plan must describe:




- District-wide and school-wide goals, as well as specific actions to be taken to achieve the goals for all students, including specific subgroups of students, in each of the eight state priority areas, plus any locally identified priority areas.
- Expected progress toward meeting the goals—and as part of a district's required annual update of the plan, the district must describe actual progress made toward meeting the goals and describe any adjustments to be made.
- Expenditures required to implement each of the goals and actions, including a description of how additional funds provided for low-income students, English learners and foster youth will be used to increase or improve services for these students.
- The process used to involve parents, students, community members, school employees and other stakeholders in developing, reviewing and supporting implementation of the LCAP.

Take a deeper look at each of the eight state priority areas in the PTA's [LCAP Quick Guides](#). These resources show how progress is measured, list key questions to ask your school leaders and provide links to more resources.

This a huge opportunity for us as parents to shape the vision for our children's education and make it happen!

How does the Local Control Funding Formula work?

The LCFF changes the way the state provides money to school districts. Under the new system, school districts will receive a uniform **base grant** for every student, adjusted by grade level. School districts will receive additional **supplemental grants** for students with greater challenges, defined as low-income students, English learners and foster youth. Plus, districts will receive additional **concentration grant** funding when the numbers of these students enrolled in a district make up more than 55 percent of a district's total enrollment.

Base Grant	Supplemental Grant	Concentration Grant
 Per student base amount, adjusted for grade level.	 Additional funds to improve or increase services for low-income students, English learners and foster youth.	 Additional funding for districts that have a high concentration (55 percent or more) of low-income students, English learners and foster youth.

The Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP): Eight priority areas to help all students succeed

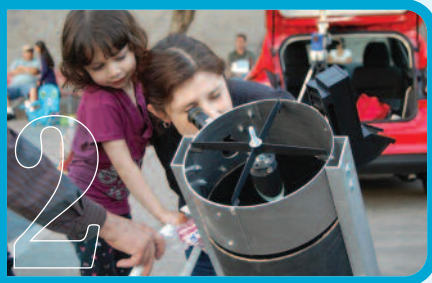
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CONDITIONS OF LEARNING



Basic Services

Providing all students with access to fully credentialed teachers in their subject areas, as well as instructional materials that align with state standards, and safe, properly maintained school facilities.



Implementation of State Standards

Ensuring school programs and services enable all students, including English learners, to access California's academic content and performance standards, including Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Math, Next Generation Science Standards, and English Language Development Standards.



Course Access

Ensuring all students have access to a broad course of study in all required subject areas, including math, social science, science, visual and performing arts, health, physical education, career and technical education and others, that prepares them for college and careers, regardless of what school they attend or where they live.

PUPIL OUTCOMES



Student Achievement

Improving achievement and outcomes for all students, as measured in multiple ways, such as test scores, English proficiency and college and career preparedness.



Other Student Outcomes

Measuring other important indicators of student performance in all required areas of study.

ENGAGEMENT



Student Engagement

Providing students with engaging programs and course work that keeps them in school, as measured in part by attendance rates, dropout rates and graduation rates.



Parent Involvement

Efforts by the school district and schools to seek input from all parents, and to engage parents in decision-making, as well as promoting parent participation in programs that meet the needs of their students and all students. (See the PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide for suggested ways to measure progress.)



School Climate

Factors both inside and outside the classroom that impact student success such as health, safety, student discipline and school connectedness, as measured in part by suspension and expulsion rates, and surveys of students, teachers and parents.



The future belongs to your child – California's new State Standards

We don't know what the jobs of tomorrow will be, but we do know our future depends on a strong workforce – and today's schools must prepare our kids to be part of it.

California is updating the way we prepare students for the future. With the implementation of new standards for all students, called **Common Core State Standards**, learning in the classroom will look different for your child.

The new standards mean...

- Deeper, richer, more relevant instruction for your child
- Clearly defined learning goals for each grade level that build from year to year
- A focus on key knowledge and skills, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity

The new standards matter because...

- They're part of an overall update to the way our schools ensure that all students achieve—including more professional development opportunities for teachers, updated instructional materials and technology, and more useful assessments
- They provide all students with hands-on experiences, and opportunities to experiment and try new approaches
- They help prepare your child and every child to navigate a fast-paced, super-connected changing world

Interested in learning more about the Common Core and the skills that students need to succeed?

- Be sure to talk with your child's teacher, and ask your school principal and district leaders for information on how they're implementing Common Core State Standards.
- **California State PTA Resources** - Find out what your child will be learning, at each grade level, in Mathematics and English Language Arts once the Common Core State Standards are in place by taking a look at the PTA's **Parents' Guide to Student Success**. You'll also learn more about how you can support your child's learning and other helpful information.
- **California Department of Education Resources Common Core Channel**



Unleash creativity through the Reflections Art Program

This school year, give children the opportunity to unleash their creative talents and be inspired while expressing them imaginatively through the PTA Reflections Art Program.

The PTA Reflections Art Program is a national arts recognition and achievement program for all students. Participating in the program is a great way for students to explore and learn about various art forms. Creating art is a valuable learning process that challenges students to use their critical thinking skills as well as their talents. As an added bonus, in showcasing and celebrating student talent, the Reflections Program increases community awareness of the importance of the arts in education.

This year's theme, **The world would be a better place if...**, is perfect inspiration as kids head into a new school year. So get out the crayons, the paints, the camera or the musical instruments and encourage your children to get creative!



To learn more about the PTA Reflections Art Program, visit the California State PTA website at www.capta.org and type "Reflections" in the search bar.



You may be eligible for a PTA Scholarship!

PTA members and volunteers, credentialed classroom teachers, counselors and school nurses are eligible for Continuing Education Scholarships from California State PTA!

These scholarships can help you further your education and pursue studies in higher education by providing funds for use at accredited colleges, universities, trade or technical schools.

California State PTA also offers scholarships for graduating high school seniors to pursue studies in higher education. The Graduating High School Senior Scholarship is designed to recognize and commend extensive community service by students.

Learn more about your opportunity for a PTA scholarship by becoming a member at your local PTA!

Articles appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted in PTA unit, council and district newsletters only. Please credit the California State PTA.

PTA IN CALIFORNIA

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The mission of the California State PTA is to positively impact the lives of all children and families.

Adopted August 2013

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CONNECT.



Plus, be sure to sign up for FREE electronic updates! Stay connected with what PTA is doing for children and families throughout the state. From legislative alerts on specific areas of interest to convention details and training, California State PTA works to keep you informed.





Member Perks

Being a PTA member benefits you and your family

California State PTA members receive exclusive discounts and offers, including:



Free student admission coupons for PTA members at **Aquarium of the Pacific**.



PTA Family Field Trips
Members enjoy big discounts!
Visit www.legoland.com/edu.



PTA members save on pre-purchased tickets at **California Academy of Sciences**.

PLUS ...

Additional savings from
VolunteerSpot, WellCard Health,
The Via Foundation, Sylvan Learning and more!



Activate your 2014-15 PTA membership card to receive **10% off** supplies and **25% off** copy and print services at **Staples**.



PTA members are eligible for discounted rates on all cars and business class service at **Enterprise Car Rental**.



Qualifying households in **Comcast** service areas receive discounts on monthly service and free internet training through **Internet Essentials**.



California State PTA members save \$50 off the regular **TeenSMART** program price. Many leading insurance companies also offer discounts for teens that complete the program.

Visit our Member Perks page for more information on these and other offers:

www.capta.org/sections/membership/perks.cfm

www.capta.org