



- Parent Teacher Association
- Parent Teacher Student Association



Power of collaboration

Our goal: **Great outcomes for kids.**

We work for the welfare of all children. PTA is a national association of 5 million members. In Seattle we have 14,000 members. The PTAs and PTSAs in Seattle together make up the Seattle Council of PTSA.



How we partner

- Share missions and goals
- Look for common threads
- Promote legislative awareness (the big picture)
- Bring communication full circle

Who we partner with:

- Key leaders – in the classroom, district and beyond

Total agreement is not necessary.

Communication is. That's how we connect.

Most questions about PTA and administration deal with:

- Use of school resources
- Before or after-school programming, or enrichment support
- ASB, booster clubs, school teams and school clubs
- Conflict at the school

PTA, advocacy

& school mail

Kid mail and district-sponsored websites are government resources and cannot be used to campaign or lobby. But some PTAs and schools distribute joint newsletters, and questions often arise during the election cycle.



1. PTA is an advocacy organization. A local unit may vote to endorse a ballot measure (say, to pass a local levy). PTAs/PTSAs cannot endorse candidates.
2. While PTAs/PTSAs may NOT use the school newsletter or website for lobbying purposes, **they can relay the news** that members voted to endorse an issue, and they can remind readers to vote.
3. They can also publish a factual article about a campaign issue, a bill before the Legislature, or potential policy change. (The school may also send home factual information about a levy.)
4. The only caveat is that PTA updates and articles should be a regular part of the newsletter.

Separate communications

If a PTA/PTSA has voted to endorse a ballot measure, and if it wants to tell readers to vote a certain way, it must use its own resources. Most send out separate emails.

Who has final say?

- Principals have authority over what goes into a school newsletter or is sent home via kid mail.
- The local PTA/PTSA board has authority over what goes into a PTA/PTSA newsletter that is distributed off campus (electronic or otherwise) and that does not use school resources (copier, etc.)

SCPTSA takes positions

Seattle Council PTSA databases are compiled and maintained independently from the district, as is our website, www.seattlecouncilptsa.org. During the state legislative session, our e-news bulletins and other communications often do advocate a particular position.

Facility use

**Guidelines
from the Public
Disclosure
Commission.
Please see
Page 3**

Building use:

Civic engagement vs. Political activity

The Public Disclosure Commission states: “PTSA’s may use school facilities for meetings supporting or opposing a ballot measure to the extent that the facilities are made available on an equal access, non-discriminatory basis, and it is a part of the normal and regular activity of the district.”

<http://www.pdc.wa.gov/archive/filers/01-03ARevised53106.pdf>

If a group wants to use school facilities for campaign purposes, it needs to rent them. If a PTA/PTSA wants to hold a rally for political purposes, it should rent the site.

This does not mean PTAs/PTSAs have to pay rent if they want to evaluate legislation or help members understand its implications, or conduct a meeting in which they vote to endorse or contribute to a campaign issue. These actions are not considered campaigning or lobbying under federal guidelines. PTAs/PTSAs routinely promote civic engagement around child-welfare issues. As long as similar groups are granted the same access, the district can let PTAs/PTSAs meet at schools rent-free.

Private use vs. School event

If a PTA is discussing a ballot measure during the course of a private PTA meeting, it is appropriate. It would not be appropriate for a PTA to campaign during a school event -- say encourage parents to vote for the levy during curriculum night.

PTAs/PTSAs also may want to host forums during the election cycle. As long as they are educational, inclusive, and non-partisan in intent, they are not considered political activity.



Most Seattle Council PTSA units are 501c3's

This indicates non-profit status with the IRS.

Contributions to 501c3's are tax deductible, and these charities limit how much they spend on lobbying (that is, influencing specific legislation). This limit ranges from 5 to 25 percent of their budget. (PTA advises 5 percent.) 501c3's are non-partisan and do not endorse candidates. Guidelines on nonprofit lobbying: www.afj.org

Enrichment support

Many PTAs/PTSAs fund arts, science and other enrichment.

They might do so by:

- Paying for field trips
- Paying for assemblies
- Hosting a math, science or literary night
- Bringing in outside experts to work with staff and students as part of a residency program.

After-school programs

They might also offer an after-school course, taught by a PTA member or by an independent contractor hired by the PTA. In general, however, most PTAs/PTSAs do not oversee a slate of before or after-school programs -- and should not be pressured to "sponsor" an outside vendor or handle money for school groups.

School clubs and school teams should be handled by the school, including all money collection.

This is an insurance and liability issue. PTA insurance only covers those events or programs that the PTA directs and supervises. If a PTA chooses to offer before or after-school classes, the following criteria must be met:

Only PTA members can handle PTA money. Staff should NOT handle PTA funds, and PTA funds should NOT be kept in a school safe.

1. The PTA must execute the contract.
2. The PTA must have been involved in the creation, planning and implementation of the program, project or activity.
3. The majority of the person-power needs to be provided by PTA members, volunteers, employees, or independent contractors hired by the PTA.
4. The PTA must vote to authorize the undertaking/conducting of the event.
5. The PTA must handle all monies.
6. Washington State PTA and AIM Insurance (our providers) strongly suggest that a PTA member monitor the session frequently or be in attendance.

A PTA cannot handle funds for programs it does not direct.



IRS implications

The IRS has very strict regulations concerning employees, and the state PTA office cautions against their hiring. Rather, it recommends that PTAs use independent contractors. The PTA must still file all pertinent tax forms (W-9, 1099-MISC and 1096) by IRS deadlines. State info sheet and sample contract:

<http://www.seattlecouncilptsa.org/resources.shtml>

Top 5

Things to know about Seattle Council PTSA

- 1. PTAs and PTSAs are community-based organizations.**
PTA was founded in 1897; its pioneers pushed child labor laws and lunch programs. The Seattle Council PTSA was chartered in 1909 to bring schools and families closer together. We are membership-based; member dues support our grants, training and educational forums, as well as basic operating costs.
- 2. We support children.**
We love teachers, clubs and sports. But our focus is the whole child, at home and at school. We speak up for kids.
- 3. Not all parent or parent-teacher groups are PTAs.**
We have 73 local units in Seattle. Some schools have independent PTOs working onsite; others have informal support groups. PTA is a national association; each PTA or PTSA is self-governed, but we follow common state bylaws. We have annual assemblies where delegates vote on these rules, as well as advocacy platforms.
- 4. Non-partisan doesn't mean neutral.**
Much of our work is program-based – that is we fund or administer programs that help kids. Per federal tax law we are non-partisan and never campaign for candidates. But we do advocate for issues and can take positions on bills or initiatives. We can lobby, but we can't spend much money on it (about 5 percent of our budget). We can and do host forums and promote civic engagement.
- 5. We are all-volunteer at the council and local-unit level.**
And mostly volunteer at the state and national level, where membership dues fund small staffs. Our state staff provides logistical support (i.e. help with legal forms, database maintenance and advocacy resources) and represents our interests to state and federal officials. They report to and are directed by member-elected boards.



What PTA/PTSA isn't:

- *Not a booster club*
- *Not the fund-raising arm for the school or district. (That would be the Alliance for Education)*
- *Not the Associated Student Body - though we may tap the same volunteer base.*

PTAs/PTSAs are fortunate to have close working relationships with schools, but we are independent.

PTA/PTSA must always label events as PTA/PTSA; and ASB/staff must always label their activities as ASB/staff.

Did you know PTA hosts a premier national arts contest? This year's Reflections theme: Together We Can.

http://www.pta.org/pta_programs.asp

Our partners

in collaboration

Seattle Council PTSA:

- Superintendent and her staff
- School board directors
- City officials
- State legislators
- Alliance for Education/schools foundation
- Fellow child advocacy groups

Local units:

- Principal and school staff
- School board director
- Building leadership teams
- Other community leaders
- Other groups working in the community (i.e. Powerful Schools, Successful Schools in Action)

Community team

Last year, we helped found Seattle Organizers for Community Engagement in Education to better coordinate work being done across the city. Seattle Organizers drafted a common Community Value Statement and jointly endorsed recommendations to improve school quality. We believe great schools depend on:

- Effective principals
- Effective teachers
- Opportunities for students
- Family engagement



More regional emphasis:

New this year, SCPTSA's executive team will be recruiting directors to pair with each of SPS's five ed director regions:

- Northeast
- Northwest
- Central/QAM
- West Seattle
- South

We had an area director structure in place, but we are adjusting and redefining job duties to complement SPS efforts to build regional supports for students and schools. We will also appoint a director to work with middle and high PTSA's.

Why PTA?

We give members a powerful voice and implement cost-effective programs for children.

Practical benefits

Incorporating as a non-profit gives individual volunteers legal protection; filing for 501c3 status with the IRS means donations to your group are tax deductible. It gives you more access to grant money. (Many grants can only be disbursed to a 501c3 entity). While community volunteers don't have to work within the context of a non-profit group, doing so makes a lot of sense.

PTA walks groups through the incorporation process and provides ongoing support and training. Units can also buy insurance at association rates.

Targeted work

Local PTA/PTSA units can then zero in on specific support that the children in their community need. When it makes sense, they can unite as a regional, state or national coalition to speak with a powerful, unified voice. PTA has made profound changes in the lives of children, bringing about labor laws, free kindergarten, school nutrition programs, the juvenile justice system, and immunizations. When PTA gets involved, **children benefit.**

PTA stands for Parent Teacher Association. PTSA stands for Parent Teacher Student Association. Both fall under the umbrella of PTA. **All about PTA:**

http://www.pta.org/about_pta.asp

Public education

- *Not for profit*
- *Public entity*
- *Funded with tax dollars*
- *Accountable to the public*
- *Principal oversees ASB/school account funds*

To help kids
in your
community

PTA

- *Non-profit*
- *Private entity*
- *Funded by members*
- *Volunteer board*
- *Must be non-partisan, cannot endorse candidates, but can take positions on issues*
- *Members oversee funds*

Resolving conflict

Tips from the governor's ed ombudsman

Effective communication between school, student and family establishes a positive learning environment and can prevent minor problems from developing into serious ones. Two-way, timely communication leads to stronger buy-in and higher participation rates in school-family partnerships. The Governor's Office of the Education Ombudsman suggests the following practices for promoting problem solving and minimizing conflict in the classroom, school and district.

Create a shared understanding of information, rights and responsibilities

- Provide clear information on school policies, procedures and rules.
- Provide clear information on classroom expectations.
- Provide clear explanation of the responsibilities of students, parents and the school.
- Offer parent workshops on how to navigate the school system.

Establish opportunities and protocols for communication

- Establish open lines of communication for parents, with language access for families who speak languages other than English. This includes making staff available at certain times and through phone, e-mail and in-person channels.
- Offer frequent explanation of communication channels in appropriate languages.
- Offer frequent written reports from teacher to parents, or phone calls with interpretation available.
- Train staff to provide proactive and timely response to communications.
- Put decisions and agreements (such as those on timelines, roles and responsibilities of parties, actions to be taken) in writing for all parties.

Manage conflict to ensure understanding of issues and perspectives

- Deliver prompt and direct response to parent concern(s).
- Take time to listen to all sides of the story so students and parents feel heard and acknowledged.
- Properly identify the issues before trying to solve the problem.
- Explore all possible options before reaching decisions and agreements (if certain issues have mandated solutions and can't be negotiated, explain to student and parents).
- Explain opportunity and method for appeal of decision, including use of a neutral party as mediator, and check for clear understanding by parents.
- Follow up to check that plan for resolution is in place and is working.

The value of an apology

Sometimes an apology is appropriate. The apology can be made by the student, by the parent or by a member of the school staff. An apology is recognition that the issue could have been handled in a different manner. It is not necessarily an admission of wrong-doing or of responsibility.

An apology can help "clear the air" and allow positive problem-solving to take place. An apology can help disarm anger or fear. An apology is a start to repairing any harm that may have occurred in the relationship. An apology shows respect and empathy.

To be effective, an apology must address the needs of the other party and will reflect on the particulars of the issue.

Excerpted from Governor's Office of the Education Ombudsman:

www.governor.wa.gov/oeo/