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PTA Policy Issue Reference Cards

Revised February 2009



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About PTA

The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) comprises millions of parents and other concerned adults devoted to supporting student achievement and promoting parent involvement in schools. As the largest volunteer child advocacy association in the nation, PTA speaks with a powerful voice on behalf of every child and provides the best tools for parents and communities to help their children be successful students.

Background

Founded February 17, 1897, PTA works exclusively on behalf of all of America's children and youth. In 1970, National PTA merged with the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, a group founded with the help of National PTA to serve parents in states with legally mandated segregation.


The Mission of PTA

- * To support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children;
- * To assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children; and
- * To encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

Membership

PTA is the nation's largest volunteer child advocacy organization, comprising more than 5 million members and 25,000 local PTAs representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Department of Defense schools in the Pacific and Europe. PTA welcomes into membership people repre-





senting a diversity of cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and political and religious beliefs—simply, anyone who supports the principles of PTA.

Resources

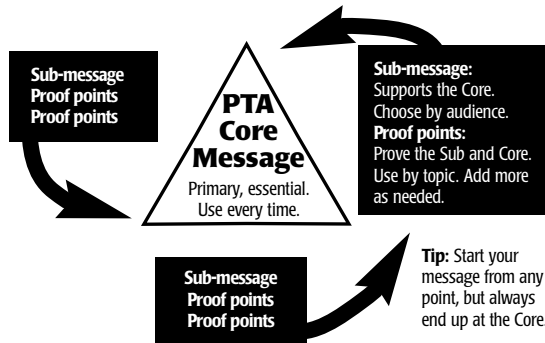
National PTA provides valuable resources, training, and services to members through state and local PTAs. Among the offerings are *Our Children* magazine, electronic newsletters, and a robust website at www.pta.org. National PTA hosts an annual convention to provide members with a forum for conducting business and with training on parent involvement issues, advocacy, and leadership building.

IRS Rules on Lobbying by Nonprofit Organizations

- * National PTA is a 501(c)(3) organization with tax-exempt public charity status.
- * To maintain its charitable status, National PTA may not campaign for or against candidates for federal, state, or local public office.
- * Specific rules apply to the association's lobbying activities and the amount of money that may be allotted to these lobbying activities.
- * Under federal tax laws, PTA members may engage in legislative activities on behalf of children and youth and may educate the general public and policy makers about officially adopted PTA positions and resolutions. As long as they remain strictly nonpartisan, PTA members may educate the general public about issues affecting children.
- * Allowable lobbying activities include: contacting or urging the public to contact members of a legislative body for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, regulations or judicial decisions.

Key Messages

A convenient guide to deliver consistent, compelling, and credible messages about the value of PTA.



PTA Core Message

Children succeed when families, schools, and communities work together.

Sub-message One:

PTA promotes and supports opportunities for families to effectively participate in their children's lives.

Sub-message Two:

Students achieve when families and teachers partner through PTA to ensure children are safe and healthy.

Sub-message Three:

PTA connects schools and communities to help children reach their full potential.



Proof Points

PTA promotes and supports opportunities for families to effectively participate in their children's lives.

- * PTA helps members connect to teachers and administrators to increase communication between school and home.
- * Families turn to PTA for advice, from handling homework to helping your child choose career goals.
- * PTA cares about and acts on issues that matter most to families and students: safe schools, quality teachers, healthy lifestyles, and arts education.
- * PTA helps local leaders plan events and involve families with national resources, tools, and training.

Students achieve when families and teachers partner through PTA to ensure children are safe and healthy.

- * PTA encourages family-school involvement programs that link to learning and student success.
- * PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships emphasize what parents, schools, and communities can do together to support student success.
- * PTA partners with other groups that share and support our mission to positively impact children's lives.
- * PTA recognizes excellence in schools that welcome parents' participation.
- * PTA empowers families to speak out on local, state, and national issues that affect children's education, health, and welfare.

PTA connects schools and communities to help children reach their full potential.

- * PTA brokers partnerships with organizations and businesses to expand learning options, such as after-school programs.
- * PTA collaborates with national sponsors to offer resources, programs, and member benefits, like retail discounts.
- * PTA increases the level of family and community involvement in underserved areas for all children to succeed.
- * PTA members serve as advisors and leaders for government agencies, non-profits, and school boards to voice the needs of all families and children.

After-School Programs

Background

The Afterschool Alliance reports that 14.3 million school-age children are responsible for taking care of themselves after school. Only 6.5 million children (11 percent of children) currently participate in after-school programs, but another 15.3 million children would participate in after-school programs if they had access to quality programs. Families need access not only to quality programs, but also to affordable programs.

The U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program awards grants to provide out-of-school learning opportunities (such as tutorial services; drug and violence prevention programs; art, music, and recreation programs; and technology education programs) for children attending low-performing schools. Due to static funding, the program has been able to fill less than 25 percent of community grant requests. Fully funding this program would cost \$2.5 billion annually.

Research shows that students who participate in after-school programs are less likely to become involved in crime or experiment with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, or sex. In addition, students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to have higher academic achievement, a greater attachment to school, and lower truancy and dropout rates.

PTA Position

PTA supports an increased investment in funding high-quality after-school programs that are accessible to all children and, where possible, use school facilities. PTA urges all of its constituents and members to work with





local communities to establish affordable, high-quality after-school programs.

Talking Points

- * Demand for high-quality, affordable out-of-school programs is high. More than 15 million school-age children who would participate in after-school programs do not have the opportunity to do so. Parents face issues of availability as well as cost.
- * The American people support a federal commitment to after-school programs. According to a 2004 Mott Foundation and Afterschool Alliance poll, 90 percent of Americans agree that there should be a national commitment to making sure every child has some type of organized activity or place to go after school.
- * The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is the only source of federal funds available for school districts to develop and provide quality after-school learning opportunities. Funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program remained stagnant for several years, while costs of after-school care and the number of eligible students increased.

Arts in Education

Background

Arts education not only cultivates imagination, self-expression, and creativity, but also plays a vital role in the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It promotes visual literacy, which enables students to analyze and interpret the meaning of complex visual imagery that permeates the media and popular culture. Additionally, the arts provide a point of departure for learning in other disciplines, including social studies, history, literature, science, and math. Research has shown that arts education increases interest in academic learning, cognitive and basic skills development, and the development of academic achievement skills. Arts education presents a window through which students are exposed to a diverse and dynamic world of perspectives and cultures. And, among these many other benefits, arts education equips students with skills essential to success in the current economic environment.

Despite these findings and the inclusion of arts as one of the “core academic subjects” in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB), many schools faced with tightening budgets fail to fund arts programs. Schools that provide little or no arts education are denying students the opportunity to master skills that will best prepare them for the highly competitive labor market of the 21st century. Arts education is a fundamental component of comprehensive learning for grades K-12.





PTA Position

PTA supports the expansion of legislation and changes in executive agency regulations that include arts education in core requirements for a high quality, comprehensive public education.

PTA supports the expansion and improvement of activities that prepare teachers to incorporate the arts into the curriculum of other academic subjects to supplement and engage student learning.

Talking Points

- * The arts are designated as a “core academic subject” in the ESEA-NCLB, requiring schools to enable all students to achieve in the arts and to reap the full benefits of a comprehensive arts education. In spite of this federal direction, access to arts education in our schools is eroding, largely due to the costs associated with implementation of NCLB.
- * A report from the Center for Education Policy concludes that, since the enactment of ESEA-NCLB, instructional time for art and music has been reduced by 22 percent. This at a time when parents, employers, and civic leaders are demanding improvements to the learning environment that will make our schools places where all learners will access a complete education and opportunities to succeed.
- * These demands cannot be met without comprehensive arts education in our nation’s schools.

Early Childhood Education

Background

Children's early experiences significantly shape their subsequent academic success, intellectual growth, and self-esteem. Research on early childhood development has revealed that 75 percent of brain growth occurs before the age of six and that without sufficient mental stimulation, children may fail to develop the synapses that facilitate learning throughout their lives. All too often, parents lack access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education programs.

Children who receive high-quality early education are less likely to be held back a grade, less likely to need special education, more likely to graduate high school, less likely to be involved in crime and delinquency, less likely to become dependent on welfare, and more likely to earn more as adults. Early childhood education can be especially beneficial for low-income children—those children most at risk for school failure and least likely to have access to high-quality programs. Federal programs designed to address the need for early childhood programs for low-income children include Head Start and Even Start.

Even Start is a federally funded and state-administered program that combines early childhood education, adult literacy education, parenting education, and parent involvement. Head Start, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides low-income children ages 3 to 5 with individualized cognitive and social/emotional development services, health and nutrition services, and social services. Head Start also includes a strong parent involvement component.





PTA Position

PTA supports effective early education and development programs that are adequately funded and developmentally appropriate, and that coordinate comprehensive services for young children and their families. In addition, PTA believes that early childhood programs should incorporate strong family involvement components.

PTA supports federal and state incentives for high-quality child-care and preschool programs that are affordable and accessible, coordinated at all levels (federal, state, and local), and characterized by high standards for teacher training, health, and safety.

Talking Points

- * Early childhood education is highly cost-effective, generating savings of as much as \$7 for each dollar invested.
- * More resources are needed to ensure that those children who qualify can attend Head Start programs. Currently, only half of all eligible children are enrolled in a program. Cuts in the program result directly in the number of children who participate in Head Start.
- * Given the positive effects of high-quality preschool programs, all children should have access to high-quality preschool experiences before kindergarten.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA-NCLB)


Background

The nation's largest and most comprehensive federal education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB) supplements state and local efforts to provide all children with a high-quality education. Below are brief descriptions of some of the key sections of the law:

- * Title I is the federal government's primary aid program for disadvantaged students and includes key parent involvement provisions within Section 1118. (see Title I issue card for further information, pages 16-17).
- * Title II funds teacher and principal training and recruitment efforts.
- * Title III assists limited English proficient (LEP) students in acquiring the language skills needed for academic achievement.
- * Title IV supports safe and drug-free schools programs, before- and after-school learning programs, rural schools, and school districts impacted by federal activity.
- * Title V supports Parental Information and Resource Centers, school counseling, arts in education, gifted and talented programs, smaller learning communities, magnet schools, public charter schools, and other innovative programs.

ESEA-NCLB requires each state to establish a statewide accountability system and proficiency goals. All children in all public schools must take annual assessments, and all children and all subgroups are expected to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) by incrementally increasing their proficiency scores. Subgroups include





low-income students, minority students, LEP students, and students with disabilities. ESEA-NCLB also requires data collection and reporting, information dissemination, and meaningful parent involvement.

PTA Position

PTA continues to support the original intent of ESEA-CLB in helping children of low-income families receive a high-quality education equal to their economically-advantaged peers. PTA supports many of NCLB's provisions, particularly those that expand parent involvement policies, improve the targeting of resources to students and schools most in need, and increase the authorization of funds for ESEA-NCLB programs.

PTA is concerned the law relies too heavily on testing as the primary measure of accountability, without looking at other important indicators that help assess school performance, such as equity of resources, physical infrastructure, class size, instructional methods, and parent involvement.

PTA believes it is imperative that parents know exactly why their child's school is failing, what the state is doing about it, and what parents' options are—all in a very clear and understandable manner. The law in its current form does not give explicit instructions to the state or local education agency (SEA or LEA) regarding how and when the parents should be involved. Moreover, there is no unified, consistent method for an LEA to keep their parents notified of how their child's school is doing and what actions the school is taking to become proficient under the current law.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA-NCLB)

Background

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind (ESEA-NCLB), targets extra resources to schools and school districts with the highest concentrations of poverty. Title I provided funding to more than 90 percent of school districts nationwide. About 12.5 million children are served in Title I school-wide programs, and 2.5 million children are served in targeted assistance schools.

Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two years are identified as a school in need of improvement and will receive technical assistance from the school district or the state. These schools also must develop improvement plans in consultation with parents. School districts must provide students from schools in need of improvement with options to transfer to another eligible public school within the district that is making AYP. If a school does not make AYP for three years, the state and school district must offer the students options for supplemental services. Additional sanctions, such as staff changes, school restructuring, or state takeover, may be required if a school continues not to make AYP.

PTA successfully advocated for measures to strengthen the parent involvement provisions in Section 1118 of Title I. The law requires that schools and school districts provide funding and other resources to increase parent involvement in education. School plans must be developed in consultation with parents of children receiving Title I services, and must include a written parent involvement policy.





PTA Position

PTA supports federal assistance for educating economically and educationally disadvantaged children, and advocates increased funding to provide services to all eligible children. PTA supports a high-quality basic education as essential to student competency. Schools should be held accountable for ensuring that all children succeed.

PTA supports the strengthening of parent involvement policies, improved targeting of resources to students and schools most in need, and increased authorization of funds for ESEA-NCLB programs.

Talking Points

- * PTA continues to support the original intent of ESEA-NCLB in helping children of low-income families receive a high-quality education equal to their economically-advantaged peers. Concern remains, however, about the law relying too heavily on testing as the primary measure of accountability, without looking at other important indicators that help assess school performance, such as equity of resources, physical infrastructure, class size, instructional methods, and parent involvement.
- * It is imperative that parents know exactly why their child's school is failing, what the state is doing about it, and what parents' options are—all in a very clear and understandable manner. The law in its current form does not give explicit instructions to the state or local education agency (SEA or LEA) regarding how and when the parents should be involved. Moreover, there is no unified, consistent method for an LEA to keep their parents notified of how their child's school is doing and what actions the school is taking to become proficient under the current law.

Parental Information and Resource Centers: Part D, Title V

Background

The Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) program is authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB) to provide leadership, technical assistance, and financial support to non-profit organizations and local educational agencies. These funds are designed to help the organizations and agencies implement successful and effective parent involvement policies, programs, and activities leading to improvements in student academic achievement. PIRCs are also mandated to strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the educational needs of children.

PIRCs were first formed by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995. In recognition of the states' needs for coordination of federal, state, and local resources around parent involvement in schools, the Department of Education reorganized the PIRCs in 2007 as statewide PIRCs. PIRCs are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Thirty percent of PIRC funding is reserved to help implement the Parents as Teachers Program (PAT), which focuses on pre- and post-natal training for parents.





PTA Position

More than 35 years of research has proven that when parents are involved in their child's education, student achievement increases. Parents must be better informed of what is going on in their child's school and each state must hold schools accountable for implementing their parent involvement plans. Parental Information and Resource Centers and other existing state and local resources with expertise in parent engagement and community outreach should be better utilized as part of the solution.

Talking Points

- * Parent involvement is a pillar of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; in fact, parents are mentioned over 300 times in the law. However, PIRC funding is the only source of federal funding that is intended solely to help schools and communities meet the requirements of parent involvement provisions contained within ESEA-NCLB.
- * During these critical times in education reform, PIRCs are playing a vital role. As states continue to implement the provisions of ESEA-NCLB, schools across America are working hard to improve academic results for all children. Inclusion of parents and families in implementing these reforms is crucial to its success. Parents who are able to be involved meaningfully and appropriately in these reform efforts will help ensure that our goals are achieved.
- * The PIRC program has recently undergone a substantial reorganization at the Department of Education, expanding the role of PIRCs to act as state-wide centers for leadership, technical support, and financial support for parent involvement. A substantial increase in funding to \$86 million is needed to implement effectively the expanded and critical role PIRCs play.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), first enacted in 1975, ensures that students with disabilities receive free appropriate public education (FAPE) and the related services and support they need to achieve. Under IDEA, children with disabilities have the right to an individualized education program (IEP) developed by a team consisting of the child's parents, teachers, and other school staff. The IEP must provide the child with an education in the least-restrictive environment (LRE). Parent involvement is a fundamental principle of IDEA. Furthermore, the law seeks to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities, and the rights of their parents, are protected.

IDEA has several parts: Part B provides grants to states for services to preschool and school-age children; Part C funds early intervention services for infants, toddlers, and their families; and Part D supports research and professional development programs. Approximately 6 million children currently receive special education services.





PTA Position

PTA believes that all children can learn and that school-family collaboration is an important component of successful learning. PTA supports schools in their implementation of educational services that benefit the education of all children, including children with disabilities.

Parents, teachers, and school administrators must work closely together to ensure that all children receive a quality public education. PTA firmly believes that only through such collaboration will all children be provided the opportunities to achieve their maximum potential.

Talking Points

- * Congress should fulfill its obligation to pay 40 percent of the costs associated with complying with IDEA, per the commitment Congress made in 1975 when the law was originally enacted.
- * An increased federal investment in IDEA is necessary to ensure that states and schools can raise academic achievement and meet state and federal testing and accountability.
- * Better collaboration between parents, teachers, school staff, and school administrators is needed to continue reforming and improving systems that provide education, early intervention, and transition services for children with disabilities.
- * Parent and family involvement must always be a fundamental principle of IDEA.

Language Acquisition

Background

Language-minority children are the fastest-growing segment of our nation's school-age population. Nearly half of all language-minority students do not yet have sufficient proficiency in English to be able to succeed academically in traditional all-English-medium classrooms. These limited English proficient (LEP) students are in every state and in nearly half of our nation's school districts.

Language acquisition programs are often classified as transitional (where students transition from English as a Second Language [ESL] classes to all-English mainstream classes), developmental (where native-language instruction is increasingly merged with instruction in English as students gain proficiency), or two-way bilingual education (where both English and the native language are used in instruction). The best language acquisition programs include ESL instruction, subject-matter teaching in a sheltered ESL classroom, and instruction in a child's native language.

Federally supported English-language acquisition programs provide an opportunity for students to gain proficiency in English, attain higher levels of academic achievement, and meet the same challenging state academic standards all children are expected to meet. Numerous studies have reported that LEP students experience greater academic achievement over the long term when their native languages are used in cultivating their skills. Language acquisition services open the door to academic excellence for LEP students and, by preventing academic failure, benefit our society as a whole. Language Acquisition Grants are authorized under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB).





PTA Position

PTA supports federal programs that assist school districts in ensuring that LEP students meet the same high academic standards all students are expected to meet. PTA believes that parents have a right to be involved in all aspects of planning, implementing, and evaluating language instructional programs, and that the allocation of funding for language instructional programs should be based on need.

PTA does not support requirements that parents “opt in” for services, or the imposition of time limits on children’s access to language instructional program services. LEP children may have vastly different needs, and all children learn differently; therefore, school districts should be allowed to tailor their language instructional programs to meet local needs.

Talking Points

- * It is extremely difficult for children who do not understand what their teachers are explaining to do well in school.
- * Bilingual education programs guarantee LEP students equal access to educational opportunities. These programs allow LEP students to acquire a full command of the English language, and employ students’ native languages to help them master challenging academic standards in all subject areas.
- * PTA supports language instructional programs that involve parents in planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Parent Involvement in Education

Background


As numerous research studies have shown, parent and family involvement increases student success. Strategies for improving parent involvement have become a focus of education policy at the local, state, and national levels. Many schools, however, still need direction regarding how to make parents true partners in their children's education. Not all schools are effectively creating successful partnerships with parents. Additionally, low-income and minority parents are often the least aware of their rights and roles.

Schools that have raised the achievement of low-income and minority students tend to be those in which parents and family members participate in a variety of roles, including shared governance. In the quest to understand, explain, and remedy the inequalities of schooling outcomes in the United States, parent involvement has become a critical element of school reform. Recognizing that parents are children's first teachers, numerous laws, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB), Head Start, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), require meaningful parent involvement.

PTA Position

PTA defines family involvement as the participation of parents in every facet of the education and development of their children from birth to adulthood. PTA believes that strong family involvement policies should be





required in all appropriate laws and programs, and that states and schools should incorporate parent involvement into all aspects of education programs. To guide and measure the quality of schools' family involvement initiatives, PTA developed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, which address six specific, yet interdependent, types of involvement that are especially beneficial to children's academic success. The six standards are: Welcoming all families into the school community, Communicating effectively, Supporting student success, Speaking up for every child, Sharing power, and Collaborating with community.

Talking Points

- * Studies document that, regardless of the economic, ethnic, or cultural background family, parent involvement in a child's education is a major factor in determining the child's success in school. Family involvement also contributes to other positive outcomes, such as better school attendance, improved homework completion rates, decreased violence and substance abuse, and higher graduation rates.
- * Family involvement programs should be well structured, and should result in consistent family participation, rather than attendance at a onetime event, such as a parent-teacher conference or an annual back-to-school night.
- * Families must be engaged in substantive tasks, such as school restructuring and setting higher learning standards.
- * Barriers to family involvement, such as no time off from work allowed, scheduling conflicts, lack of transportation, lack of child care, and language and cultural differences, must be removed.

Public School Choice

Background

Public school choice provides parents the opportunity to select the public school that is best able to meet the needs of their child. The choices that are available to parents and their children vary widely from state to state and from school district to school district. The range of choices available may include:

- * Magnet or theme-based schools—public schools with a specialized focus, curriculum, and/or instructional approach.
- * Charter schools—schools that operate under a contract, or charter, with local school boards or other governing agencies. Charter schools may also incorporate aspects of theme-based schools.
- * Privately managed public schools. The private management of schools by education management organizations (EMOs) occurs through contractual agreements; the local school board entrusts the EMO with the day-to-day administration of the school.
- * Public schools outside the child's assigned school boundaries or in another school district or system. Provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB) require that students in schools identified as being in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring be given the opportunity to enroll in a different public school that is making adequate yearly progress.





PTA Position

PTA supports public school choice and the creation of innovative schools that are based on a set of principles designed to retain and enhance the integrity of public schools. Charter and privately managed public schools need to:

- * Be open to all students.
- * Comply with federal and state laws governing public schools.
- * Adhere to federal, state, and local laws related to student health and safety.
- * Be accountable to local school boards in the districts where they are located.
- * Be funded in such a way as to preclude the charging of tuition or mandatory fees not charged by other public schools in the district.
- * Be independent of nonpublic, sectarian, religious, or home-based school affiliations.
- * Include parents in meaningful decision-making roles.

Talking Points

- * PTA supports public school choice that introduces innovation into the education system without diverting taxpayer money to private schools.
- * PTA is prepared to assist magnet, charter, and privately managed schools in meeting the needs of students.
- * PTA believes that efforts to privatize a school must consider issues of accountability, parent and community involvement, quality of services, and public interest.

Religion in Public Schools

Background

Issues involving religion in public schools remain highly controversial and politically charged. Students have the same right to engage in prayer during the school day as they do to engage in any other comparable activity. Public schools may teach about religion, provided that they do not promote any religion or allow religious instruction by outsiders on school premises during the school day.

The Charitable Choice provision has been included in several federal social and educational programs in an effort to level the playing field for religious organizations seeking federal grants. Neither religious nor secular organizations may discriminate against individuals seeking access to the grant-funded services or programs. Efforts to apply the Charitable Choice provision to additional federal programs are controversial; debate focuses on discrimination in hiring practices and ensuring that services meet professional standards. Federal policy makers struggle to balance the desire to expand the participation of religion-based organizations in federally funded social services with the need to fund high-quality programs and the constitutional demands for the separation of church and state.

PTA Position

PTA supports the right of children to pray, but opposes mandatory or organized prayer or religious worship, whether led by a school official or student, at official public school functions. PTA supports moments of silence that do not favor religious over secular practices. PTA encourages the implementation of policies that protect





against coercion or harassment of students based on their decisions to engage in or refrain from prayer or any other permitted activity.

PTA supports instruction about religion, but believes that public schools should not engage in religious faith instruction. PTA supports equal access to school facilities; all student clubs should be permitted to meet at school and have equal access to campus media to announce meetings.

PTA opposes government funding of organizations that discriminate in employment or delivery of services based on religion.

Talking Points

- * The U.S. Constitution does not prohibit purely private religious speech by students. The right to engage in voluntary prayer or religious discussion does not include the right to have an audience listen or to compel other students to participate.
- * The federal Equal Access Act requires that schools that open their facilities to private groups make those facilities available to religious organizations on the same terms.
- * Caution is needed in extending the Charitable Choice provision to additional federal programs. Legislation must ensure that organizations receiving federal funds are fiscally and programmatically accountable and do not engage in employment discrimination or use federal funds to conduct religious instruction, worship, or proselytize.

School-to-Work and Higher Education

Background

In today's economic climate, a high school diploma is no longer sufficient to secure a job that will provide financial security and upward mobility. More and more jobs require a postsecondary education, even jobs that 10 years ago did not. However, according to a recent study by ACT, Inc., too few students graduate from high school and even fewer leave high school with the occupational and academic skills they need to succeed in the workplace or in postsecondary education.

Today, only two-thirds of all entering 9th-graders will graduate from high school on schedule. Of those who eventually do graduate, roughly three-quarters will go on to some form of postsecondary education within two years of their high school graduation. More than one-quarter of freshmen entering postsecondary institutions, however, enroll in one or more remedial courses in reading, writing, or mathematics.

Acquiring the proficiency needed to succeed is especially difficult for low-income students and minority students, who, according to the Education Trust, typically graduate high school with skill levels equivalent to what their white and affluent peers have achieved by the end of middle school. The challenges are exacerbated for those students who drop out, a group that includes roughly half of all black, Latino, and Native American students.

Projections indicate that the number of postsecondary school graduates will not be sufficient to fill the millions of new jobs that will be added to the labor market in the coming years. And, according to ACT, students' leaving high school without being prepared for postsecondary training or entry into the workforce will cost our nation more than \$16 billion each year in remediation, lost productivity, and increased demands on criminal justice and welfare systems.





PTA Position

PTA supports legislation and programs that provide academic, counseling, and college preparatory services to assist students, particularly low-income and disadvantaged students, in secondary school completion and postsecondary enrollment.

PTA supports legislation and programs, such as federal grants to students and other forms of financial aid, that foster an economically, culturally, and ethnically diverse student population.

PTA believes the federal government has a vital role in preparing students to succeed in the workplace by assisting states and local communities prepare school-age and adult populations to enter the labor market and to meet national needs and interests.

Talking Points

- * Postsecondary education substantially increases one's long-term earnings potential, lowers incarceration rates, results in higher levels of civic participation, and benefits society as a whole through lessening the burden on social safety-net programs.
- * Public benefits, such as increased economic growth and productivity, justify greater federal support for increasing access to postsecondary education for all citizens, particularly for those students who, due to financial constraints, would not otherwise enroll.
- * Every student should be afforded every opportunity to graduate from high school or earn a GED, and should be adequately prepared for and encouraged to pursue postsecondary education or employment.

Teacher Quality

Background

To help students improve their achievement levels, teachers must increase their own knowledge and skills and learn new teaching methods. They also must align their curricula with the academic standards students are expected to meet, and integrate technology into their instruction.

Teachers need ongoing content instruction, mechanisms to network and share information with their peers, and opportunities to form partnerships with colleges, teacher organizations, parents, and other experts in their field. New teachers—especially those working in urban areas—have additional needs that must be addressed to ensure that they are prepared to enter the classroom and do not quickly become discouraged and leave the profession.

Recognizing that good teachers are essential to ensuring student academic success, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB) sets stringent new teacher-quality requirements. In addition, Title II of the Higher Education Act focuses on teacher quality and authorizes funds for programs that promote teacher and principal training, recruitment, and retention. Funds may also be used to attract teachers to high-need areas or underserved schools and to hire teachers for the specific purpose of reducing class size. Title II addresses another key component of high-quality professional development programs—parent involvement—by requiring that professional development activities include training on how to involve parents in their children's education.





PTA Position

PTA supports strong teacher-quality requirements, as well as adequately funded teacher preparation and staff development programs. These programs must be designed to initiate and strengthen professional excellence in teaching techniques, academic knowledge, human understanding, critical thinking, technology use, and parent and community involvement. PTA believes that pre- and in-service teacher development programs must provide instruction on working effectively with parents and other family members to increase student learning.

Talking Points

- * Over this next decade, an estimated 2 million new teachers will need to be hired to accommodate record-high student enrollments, a high rate of projected teacher retirements, and local efforts to reduce class size. Meanwhile, schools are implementing comprehensive reform initiatives requiring teachers to focus on increasing student achievement.
- * Research has shown that all students benefit from having high-quality teachers. Yet, the more challenging student populations are disproportionately taught by less experienced educators. To meet the needs of today's students, teachers need to be qualified, diverse, and well prepared.
- * Teacher development programs must be designed to strengthen professional excellence in teaching techniques, academic knowledge, human understanding, critical thinking, technology use, and parent, family and community involvement.

Testing and Accountability

Background

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB) outlines extensive new testing and accountability requirements that will significantly affect students and schools nationwide. The law requires states to test annually all public school students in grades 3 through 8 in at least math and reading, and to test secondary school students at least once in grades 9 through 12. The tests must be aligned with nationally recognized professional and technical standards, must provide information about student attainment of such standards, and must have multiple up-to-date measures of academic achievement. All schools must continue to disaggregate test-result data by subgroup (low-income students, minority students, limited English proficient students, students with disabilities, etc.).

States must establish adequate yearly progress (AYP) standards for all public schools in their states; all students must show annual improvement and meet the state's proficiency level by 2014. If more than 5 percent of students in a school, or within one of the identified subgroups, fail to take the state assessment or fail to meet the annual proficiency goal, the entire school will be identified as failing to make AYP.





PTA Position

PTA opposes the use of a national, mandated, standardized test as the sole criterion for measuring a school's or student's progress. An assessment system should evaluate higher-order skills, including students' abilities to use technology, conduct research, engage in scientific investigation, and solve problems. An accountability system should include other indicators of educational quality, such as competency of teaching staff, class size, parent involvement, facility condition, and quality of instructional materials.

PTA also believes that states and schools must have the resources—including adequate financial and technical support—to address specific problems and ensure that schools can meet high standards. Student assessment should identify how instruction and learning can be improved.

Talking Points

- * States and school districts should have equitable resources, including equitable funding and technical support, if they are to be held accountable for meeting specific standards of performance.
- * Assessments should be used to help parents and teachers determine the specific academic needs of students and increase opportunities for students. They should not be used for high-stakes determinations, such as grade promotion or graduation.

Funding for Education and Child-Related Programs

Background

The federal government provides critical financial support to states, school districts, and local schools to target priorities and problems of national interest, supplement state and local efforts, and provide seed money for state and local education initiatives.

Despite recent increases in funding for U.S. Department of Education programs, not enough money is being allocated to serve all the students and families who are eligible for critical elementary and secondary education programs, including Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA–NCLB), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Parental Information and Resource Centers, teacher-quality initiatives, school construction, school counseling, vocational education, educational technology, Impact Aid, and bilingual education programs.

Without increased federal investment in education, states and public schools simply cannot meet the many challenges they face, which include

- * Record growth in student enrollments;
- * An increased proportion of students affected by poverty, special needs, and limited English proficiency;
- * School facilities problems that affect child health, class size, school safety, and access to educational technology;
- * A critical need for new, highly qualified teachers;
- * Rapidly changing educational technology needs; and
- * New testing, teacher-quality, and accountability requirements.





PTA Position

PTA believes that in order to ensure that schools and districts can provide a quality education to all children, meet the high accountability standards set forth in ESEA-NCLB, and prepare students for employment in today's high-tech economy, greater financial resources must be provided. Schools are struggling to carry out basic educational services. Yet demands are being placed on schools to improve student achievement, without sufficient resources being provided to hire teachers, expand compensatory education programs, upgrade technology, repair facilities, or address any of the other challenges they face.

PTA believes a sustained national commitment to increase federal spending for education is critical to strengthening our nation's economy and ensuring a quality education for all students. Investing in America's children is an investment in both the current and future economic well-being of our nation.

Talking Points

- * PTA supports annual passage of federal appropriations bills providing adequate levels of funding for education and child-related programs, and opposes funding proposals and budget process changes that cut or negatively affect the availability of such funding.
- * In order to ensure that schools and districts can provide a quality education to all children and meet the high accountability standards set forth in ESEA-NCLB, greater financial resources must be provided. Additional targeted federal funds will help schools afford specific interventions designed to improve student achievement, such as reducing class sizes in early grades, providing quality preschool and after-school programs, and ensuring that students learn from highly qualified teachers.
- * Other federal agencies that assist children, families, schools, and communities (through Head Start, nutrition, juvenile justice, child protection, child welfare, health-care, environmental protection, and youth service programs) are also funded inadequately.

Funding for Parental Information and Resource Centers

Background

The Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) program is authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA-NCLB) to provide leadership, technical assistance, and financial support to non-profit organizations and local educational agencies. These funds are designed to help the organizations and agencies implement successful and effective parent involvement policies, programs, and activities leading to improvements in student academic achievement. PIRCs are also mandated to strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the educational needs of children.

PIRCs were first formed by the U.S. Department of Education in 1995, ESEA-NCLB. In recognition of the states' needs for coordination of federal, state and local resources around parent involvement in schools, the Department of Education reorganized the PIRCs in 2007 as statewide PIRCs. PIRCs are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Thirty percent of PIRC funding is reserved to help implement the Parents as Teachers Program (PAT), which focuses on pre- and post-natal training for parents.





PTA Position

More than 35 years of research has proven that when parents are involved in their child's education, student achievement increases. Parents must be better informed of what is going on in their child's school and each state must hold schools accountable for implementing their parent involvement plans. Parental Information and Resource Centers and other existing state and local resources with expertise in parent engagement and community outreach should be better utilized as part of the solution.

Talking Points

- * Parent involvement is a pillar of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; in fact, parents are mentioned over 300 times in the law. However, PIRC funding is the only source of federal funding that is intended solely to help schools and communities meet the requirements of parent involvement provisions contained within ESEA-NCLB.
- * During these critical times in education reform, PIRCs are playing a vital role. As states continue to implement the provisions of ESEA-NCLB, schools across America are working hard to improve academic results for all children. Inclusion of parents and families in implementing these reforms is crucial to its success. Parents who are able to be involved meaningfully and appropriately in these reform efforts will help ensure that our goals are achieved.
- * The PIRC program has recently undergone a substantial reorganization at the Department of Education, expanding the role of PIRCs to act as state-wide centers for leadership, technical support, and financial support for parent involvement. A substantial increase in funding to \$86 million is needed to implement effectively the expanded and critical role PIRCs play.

Public Funds for Public Schools

Background

Education vouchers provide parents a public subsidy to help finance the costs of sending their children to a school other than a public school. Although they may be called scholarships, certificates, portability, or choice, these funding schemes are all vouchers and authorize the use of public tax dollars to pay private and parochial school tuition and fees.

Education tax subsidies are a sibling of vouchers. These may be proposed as tax-free savings accounts, or as tax deductions or credits for education expenses. The impact of each is to reduce public revenue without improving public education.

Vouchers and education tax subsidies do not provide “choice” since neither can guarantee parents that their children will be admitted to the school of their choice. There is also no strong evidence that these programs improve student achievement. Furthermore, these programs undermine accountability, since private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools.

PTA Position

PTA supports public funds for public schools only, and opposes using tax dollars to finance education vouchers for private and religious schools. PTA opposes tax credits and deductions for elementary and secondary school tuition and other education-related expenses for public and nonpublic school students.





Talking Points

- * Vouchers divert money from public schools (where 90 percent of all school-age children are enrolled) to private schools (where the public has no oversight of how those public dollars are spent), while doing nothing to improve public education.
- * Vouchers will not ensure parental “choice.” Private and religious schools may deny applications for enrollment for any reason. The “choice” in “choice programs” lies with private school administrators, not with parents.
- * There is no strong evidence that voucher programs—whether funded directly, or indirectly through education tax subsidies—improve student achievement.
- * Americans have consistently rejected vouchers, both in surveys and in referendums.
- * The primary beneficiaries of education tax subsidies are wealthy families whose children already attend private and religious schools or whose children are home-schooled, as opposed to families whose children attend public school.

Child Nutrition and Wellness

Background

Our nation has created a network of successful and cost-effective anti-hunger programs, which improve the quality of life for millions of Americans. PTA helped enact the original legislation for the National School Lunch Act in 1946, and has fought to improve anti-hunger and nutrition programs ever since. Numerous studies have confirmed the success of the federal school meals programs in improving the nutrition, health, and education of children in the United States.


The nation is currently faced with a childhood obesity crisis that has reached epidemic proportions. At the same time, many children who are considered to be of a healthy weight are suffering from malnutrition, with as few as 2 percent of them eating a nutritious diet.

Investing in child nutrition programs cuts future expenses associated with poor nutrition and low academic achievement. PTA will seek the expansion and improvement of the National School Lunch Program, National School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Nutrition Education and Training Program, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. These programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

PTA Position

PTA supports federal efforts to improve child nutrition and wellness. Priorities include promoting universal meals programs, updating regulations governing school meals programs to reflect current science and health





trends, advocating for parent involvement in school wellness councils, and encouraging parents to play a more active role in the messaging sent to their children about nutrition and healthy food choices. PTA opposes child nutrition block grants and other proposals that would threaten the availability of funds for programs that feed hungry children. Existing child nutrition programs promote overall nutrition and wellness, prepare children for learning, and improve children's school attendance and behavior.

Talking Points

- * Millions of children depend on federal child nutrition programs to provide up to one-half of their nutrient intake per day.
- * Adequate nutrition improves school attendance, learning, behavior, and productivity.
- * Payments for school meals go directly to the schools and institutions—not to students—and provide the basic support needed to operate these programs. Without this support, schools would not be able to offer the programs, denying access to all, and harming the neediest children the most.
- * School meal reimbursements have fallen far behind the costs of production and are inadequate to maintain the high-quality nutrition standards established in law.
- * Regulations governing school meals programs should reflect current science and health trends to better address the health and wellness needs of all children.
- * Parents should be the principal voice sending messages to their children about nutrition and healthy food choices.

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Background

First passed in 1974, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP Act) is the primary law regarding juvenile justice reform and provides:

- * A nationwide juvenile justice planning and advisory system spanning all states, territories, and the District of Columbia;
- * Federal Funding for delinquency prevention and improvements in state and local juvenile justice programs and practices; and
- * Operation of a federal agency (the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) dedicated to training, technical assistance, model programs, and research and evaluation, to support state and local efforts.

JJDP Act includes the following four core requirements:

1. Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO)—ensures that status offenders (truants, runaways, etc.) who have not committed a criminal offense are not held in secure juvenile facilities for extended periods of time or in secure adult facilities for any length of time.
2. Adult Jail and Lock-up Removal—prohibits youth from being detained in adult jails and lock-ups except for limited times before or after a court hearing.
3. Sight and Sound Separation—children cannot be housed next to adult cells, share dining halls, recreation areas or other areas that could expose them to threats or abuse from adult offenders.
4. Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)—states are required to assess and address the





disproportionate contact of youth of color at key contact points in the juvenile justice system, from arrest to detention to confinement.

PTA Position

PTA believes that truants and other youth who have not committed criminal offenses should not be incarcerated and instead, should be diverted into community-based, family-focused alternatives that address the root behavior. PTA supports efforts to treat youths in the justice system in an age-appropriate manner and provide youths with developmentally appropriate, evidence-based services and supports.

PTA promotes and encourages efforts to have children removed from adult jails in every city and county throughout the nation and encourages the placement of juveniles in appropriate facilities.

PTA encourages efforts to ensure equity and competence with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender and sexual orientation in legal representation before the courts and throughout all judicial system practices and policies.

Talking Points

- * Youth with non-criminal behaviors, such as truants, should not be locked up and should be provided with community-based, family-focused interventions.
- * Placing youth offenders in age appropriate facilities, while providing youth with developmentally appropriate, evidence-based services and supports, reduces recidivism rates and can help ensure their health and well-being.
- * Promoting fair, rational and effective juvenile justice policies can reduce overrepresentation and disparate treatment of youth of color in the justice system.

Media and Technology Safety

Background


The Internet, television, movies, music, and cell phones are a daily part of our children's lives. While electronic media and technology can open up vast new worlds of rich learning experiences to children, they can also convey messages about violence, sex, commercialism, stereotyping, and other themes that worry parents and can impact negatively a child's development and socialization. It is the responsibility of parents, teachers, and other caregivers to monitor and control children's exposure to electronic media and technology and to promote family media literacy. Achieving a balance between the learning and positive entertainment opportunities available through electronic media and technology and the risks associated with exposure to inappropriate and occasionally dangerous content/activities is the responsibility of parents and other adults in a child's life. However, without tools, information and resources that are easily accessible, user-friendly, and consistent, parents and other responsible adults are handicapped severely in their efforts to protect their children.

PTA Position

PTA is committed to the development and use of media and technology that improves the quality of life by serving as a positive resource in the education, development, and socialization of children and youth. PTA also supports the development of improved media-technology tools for parents that are user-friendly, universal, accurate, and informative.

PTA supports the expansion and improvement of policies, regulations and legislation that better enable parents to be informed and engaged in the use of the Internet, wireless communications, and the selection of





media by children and youth. Additionally, PTA supports the improvement of non-legislative, industry responses to media-technology safety needs of children and youth as an alternative to formal legislative and regulatory action.

PTA opposes censorship, but supports strongly industry initiatives that facilitate the ability of parents to make and enforce their child's/youth's viewing of family-defined appropriate content and participation in online activities such as social networking and blogs. Should industry initiatives fail to act in a responsible manner, PTA may revisit its reluctance to promote government regulation, particularly with regard to illegal activities.

PTA supports efforts to limit significantly advertising to children, particularly the use of familiar characters from animated television shows and movies for commercial promotions.

Talking Points

- * Parents, broadcast and cable media, content and service providers, and federal regulatory agencies have a responsibility to support, monitor, and improve the quality of electronic media and technology services, programs, productions, and safety mechanisms as well as provide tools and information for parents and other caretakers to make informed choices about their child's use of the Internet and the broad variety of available media and technology resources.

School Construction and Environmental Health

Background

In recent surveys, teachers and school staff reported such persistent school building problems as fallen ceiling tiles, poor lighting, mold that has caused mushrooms to grow, crumbling exterior walls, asbestos, freezing rooms in the winter and extreme heat in the summer, and poor ventilation. At least one-third of existing public schools need extensive repair or replacement. At least two-thirds have unhealthy environmental conditions, such as polluted indoor air, toxic chemical and pesticide use, molds, the presence of asbestos and mercury, and lead in water and paint. Far too many children and school staff are entering school buildings that undermine their learning and health.


School overcrowding is also a serious problem. Many schools are trying to reduce class sizes so students can receive the attention and instruction they need to succeed academically. Makeshift classrooms do not appropriately serve learning needs and can have a detrimental effect on teacher and student morale.

These problems demand a sustained partnership of federal, state, and local entities. States and schools cannot address these problems alone, and equity in education must be a national priority. Modern, safe, and healthy education facilities will result in a better-educated, more informed, and more productive population.

PTA Position

Adequate, up-to-date school buildings are critical to providing high-quality learning opportunities. Buildings and grounds must be well maintained and safe, regardless of the age of the building. Effective facilities are





ones that provide barrier-free access for individuals with disabilities, are free from health and environmental hazards, offer adequate space for low pupil-to-teacher ratios, provide appropriate space for education-related services, and are equipped with appropriate technology for classroom and instructional use.

PTA supports a variety of mechanisms that support investment in public school facilities. PTA supports the Qualified Zone Academy Bond (QZAB) program, which helps states and school districts modernize facilities. PTA also supports federal tax incentives that generate local bonds for school construction and repair.

Talking Points

- * Poor environmental conditions affect the health of students and school staff and contribute to absenteeism, student medication use, learning difficulties, sick building syndrome, staff turnover, and greater liability for school districts.
- * Researchers have noted a connection between poor air quality and increased incidences of asthma. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 6.3 million school-aged children are afflicted with asthma, resulting in the loss of approximately 14 million school days each year. Asthma-related absences disproportionately affect urban areas, which tend to have poorer overall air quality and house larger populations of African-American, Hispanic, and other minority students.
- * Studies estimate that the cost to construct new schools and classrooms and to modernize existing schools is more than \$300 billion nationwide including costs for upgrading science labs and media centers, enabling Internet access, and making health and safety renovations.

School Safety: Safe and Nurturing Environments

Background

Parents, policy makers, and education officials agree that schools should provide safe and nurturing environments for all students and teachers—and most schools do so. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Indicators of School Crime and Safety, students are less likely to be victims of violent crime at school than away from school. However, incidents of serious crime and violence do occur in a small percentage of schools, and bullying is a problem that has received increased attention in recent years. What is most troubling about school safety problems is that they affect more than just the direct victims. Incidents of crime, violence, and bullying can also disrupt the learning process and cause emotional and psychological damage to bystanders.

Parents are concerned about schools' ability to address school safety problems and the complex mental health, social, and personal needs that students might face as a result of such problems. By coordinating services and involving parents, schools and communities can promote positive mental health and considerate behavior, identify issues that are interfering with a child's mental and emotional well-being, counsel children and families to help resolve conflicts or deal with crises, and teach children behavior management skills. Federal programs, such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program, support communities and schools in developing collaborative, comprehensive programs that create safe, disciplined, and drug-free environments.





PTA Position

PTA supports initiatives that foster a safe and supportive school climate. Such initiatives include violence and delinquency prevention, counseling programs, and health and welfare reforms that aid needy children and families. PTA believes that school health and counseling programs and professionals should collaborate with their community counterparts. PTA supports policies that teach respect for diversity. PTA supports policies and programs that address the prevention, intervention, and elimination of bullying, as well as policies and programs that address the rehabilitation of youth who have entered the criminal justice system.

Talking Points

- * Student achievement is related to safety. If students are worried about their safety while at school, they won't be able to concentrate on their schoolwork. Further, the time that teachers are spending on school safety issues is time best spent helping their students learn.
- * Parents must be involved in meaningful ways in the development, implementation, and evaluation of all programs designed to make schools safer.
- * Even one incident of violence in a school is too many. Federal initiatives that promote collaborative approaches, enhance schools' capacities to provide needed services, and train school personnel to identify and address early warning signs can reduce incidents of school violence.

Support Services to Children and Families in Poverty

Background

Enacted in 1996, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, a \$16.5 billion block grant, transferred the responsibility for carrying out welfare policy from the federal government to the state governments. Under the law, families do not have an entitlement to cash assistance. In addition, Congress imposed a five-year time limit on receipt of aid, and established sanctions for TANF recipients who do not comply with program and work requirements. TANF required states to move 25 percent of their welfare recipients into jobs or work-related activities by 1997, and 50 percent by 2002.

Being employed does not guarantee living improvements for children and families. For example, while some families received higher wages due to their jobs, they experienced a decline in total disposable income through the loss of assistance in the form of food stamps, job training, health care, child care, and other support services, resulting in an overall decline in income.

PTA Position

PTA supports policies that meet the special needs of children and families in poverty. In addition, PTA supports federal legislation that assists states in providing necessary public health and welfare services to children, youth, and families.





Talking Points

- * Research shows a connection between how welfare-to-work programs affect family finances and how well children succeed. When programs increase family incomes and offer supports, such as quality early childhood opportunities, there is a positive effect on children.
- * Welfare caseloads have decreased by more than 50 percent since TANF was enacted; yet, more families are living below the poverty line.
- * Welfare reform must address the serious barriers—such as health problems, illiteracy, substance abuse, domestic violence, and ill or disabled family members—that often prevent employment.
- * The reauthorization of TANF and other welfare programs must address whether these programs help move children and families out of poverty, not just off of welfare rolls.





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