



# How to Welcome Diverse Perspectives into your PTA

PTAs are strongest when their leaders and members reflect the diversity of their own communities. Multiple perspectives help to solve tough problems by bringing a variety of solutions to the table. Try these five strategies to help build a more inclusive PTA.

## 1. Learn more about the community your PTA is serving.

- + **Don't** assume you know what is happening in the community or that you understand the different cultures represented.
- + **Do** ask questions to understand:
  - What are the different cultural values of families in the community?
  - What languages other than English do families in our community speak?
  - Are the PTA and school mindful of the diverse needs of families?
  - What are some of the stigmas that could affect PTA involvement?

## 2. Avoid tokenism.

- + **Don't** ask a parent to be the lead of a subgroup simply because they belong to it. Your one international parent that is a PTA member shouldn't be in charge of inviting the other parents to the multicultural festival.
- + **Do** reach out to minority populations within your school for all events. The outreach should be performed throughout the year, not only for multicultural events.

Sacajawea PTA in Washington State created a parent-led equity team. The equity team plans and organizes inclusive schoolwide PTA events and helps ensure that PTA activities are being reviewed through an anti-bias lens.

### Equity initiatives include:

- + Bringing culturally diverse speakers and performers to school events and assemblies
- + Creating a cross-cultural events calendar for the weekly school newsletter
- + Translating school and PTA communications into multiple languages
- + Collecting immigration resources and information
- + Securing technology grants to give students increased computer access at school
- + Providing anti-bias teaching resources
- + Organizing workshops and trainings for staff, parents and students



“Whenever we get a few Latino leaders in, they tend to get overworked and burned out. They end up being stretched out the thinnest out of our leaders....As we increase our leadership, we need to make sure that they get to provide leadership and not get stuck in a rut of always being used as translators or mediators.”

– Arkansas PTA

### 3. Build trust.

- + **Don't** assume you are in a position of trust because you are a PTA leader.
- + **Do** work on building a meaningful relationship with stakeholders and families.
  - Open up first and share your personal story.
  - Be mindful of hesitations to provide input or information. This can be due to immigration concerns, data privacy or basic lack of trust.
  - Build partnerships with trusted community leaders or influencers by approaching local community meeting places to offer support, such as churches, community centers, community organizations, libraries, etc.

### 4. Cater to the needs of the community.

- + **Do** ask questions to understand their needs. For example, immigrant families or families of kids with special needs may need additional information about navigating the sometimes complicated school system.
- + **Don't** approach families about the benefits of PTA membership without knowing their needs.

### 5. Find alternative meeting locations.

- + **Don't** assume that the school is the most convenient place to meet. There may be fear, discomfort or lack of trust in going to the school. This may range from a parent who fears the school may question their legal status, to a parent who has not had a positive experience at the school.
- + **Do** offer families alternate options such as community centers, a church or even a virtual meeting.

#### CHALLENGE:

Scott PTA in Oregon found themselves asking, "How can we change how we do things to better meet the needs of all of our families?"

#### SOLUTION:

Scott PTA changed the style of their meetings to be more family engagement focused and made meetings more accessible by holding some at community centers where families felt more comfortable.



"We have taken an intentional approach to diversity, inclusion and equity, shifting from theory to practice. Essentially, families now feel welcomed and valued as we have created safe spaces for them to share their stories and experiences."

– Durham County Council PTA

