

**B**uilding [inclusive](#) communities requires PTA leaders to question their own assumptions, intentionally build relationships and invite diverse perspectives to the table. Enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion in your school is an ongoing journey. It may feel overwhelming, so if you are not sure where to start, we recommend **listening!**

It's particularly important that you prioritize listening to members of your community who you haven't traditionally engaged. Connect with the families who may not participate during meetings or may not be members at all. Use the conversations as an opportunity to collaborate, brainstorm and create a foundation for ongoing relationships. If you are not sure about the demographics of your community, take the time to complete a [diversity profile](#) first.

Hosting listening sessions will enable you to learn more about your families' school experiences and their perspectives on the PTA. Listening is a powerful opportunity to learn how you can most effectively partner with families to help every child reach their full potential. Below you will find a guide to hosting these conversations. If you have questions about this resource, please reach out to [diversity@pta.org](mailto:diversity@pta.org).

## LISTENING SESSION OVERVIEW

### Before the Session

- **Decide how you will recruit for your listening sessions.** Find trusted community partners who can help you spread the word in communities you want to reach.
- **Determine how you would like to host these conversations.** Be clear if these will be one-on-one interviews, small focus groups or a mixture of both.
- **Decide how you will follow up in advance.** Make sure to collect each participant's contact information so you can follow up with them for continued communication.

### During the Session

- **Be aware of your assumptions and stay in listening and learning mode.** Your goal is not to explain PTA or advocate for PTA. Your goal is to gather information about people in your community, what their experiences have been, and what their priorities are.
- **Do your best to create a judgment-free zone.** There isn't one right way to engage with the school. Everyone cares about their children and that may look different in different families. Recognize that families may feel vulnerable sharing their opinions and be affirming and validating.

### After the Session

- **Follow up with a thank you!** Be sure to follow up shortly after the discussion with a thank you and confirmation that their gift card has been sent. You can also use this communication as an opportunity to share about your PTA.

- **Reach back out as you develop your roadmap.** It is essential that you continue to communicate with participants as you develop your roadmap. Since these community members shared their time and thoughts, make sure you circle back and share updates and continue to be open to feedback, as you do this work.

## AGENDA

45-60 MIN. DEPENDING ON THE GROUP SIZE

- Welcome, Setting the Stage & Introductions (10 min.)
- Group Questions and Discussion- (30-45 min.)
- Closing & Next Steps (5 min.)

## SESSION INTRODUCTION – 10 MIN.

### Setting the Stage

- Greeting—Introduce yourself, with your name and PTA role, and share that you appreciate people taking the time to share their thoughts and experiences.
- Overview of the conversation
  - Today, we're here to learn more about the ways you prefer to engage in your children's school life. Engagement takes many forms—it could look like watching your child in a concert or a talent show, cheering them on during a sports game, helping them homework, advocating for their needs and accommodations, volunteering at a school event, or attending a PTA meeting.
  - We're going to discuss your experience with the PTA, the ways you're most interested in engaging, and how we can better serve you. We know it's possible that you may not want to engage with the PTA for a variety of reasons. Whatever your experience—good or bad—we'd like to hear it today.
  - And we're going to share our plan to continue this conversation with you as we develop a plan to help us bridge the gaps and needs in our school community.

### Group Agreement

- Create a safe space
- Speak from your own experience
- Hold confidentiality

### Introductions

- Introduce yourself first! Include your name (again), number of kids, what grades they're in and your role in the PTA.
- Ask participants to please share their name, # of kids and what grades they're in.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – 30 MIN.

How do you engage in your child's education?

If prompting is needed, share examples of engagement, like:

- Supporting learning at home
- Checking your child's grades
- Talking to your kids about the future
- Enrolling them in extracurricular activities
- Going to your kids' events like sports games, concerts or talent shows

What makes it harder to support your child's education at our school?

What makes it easier?

What do you know about PTA?

Is the PTA a place where you feel welcomed and included?

Thumbs up for yes, thumbs down for no, followed by a share out of why/why not?

## THANK YOU & NEXT STEPS – 5 MIN.

Thank You

- Thank participants for their time
- Share details about delivery of the stipend (if applicable)

Next Steps

- Share how participants can stay engaged with your PTA (e.g., upcoming events, meetings, membership, etc.).
- Ask participants to save the date for a follow up conversation where you'll be asking for feedback on a plan to make the PTA more inclusive.
- Ask participants how they prefer to be contacted with future updates and information.