



# OUR NATION, OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR SCHOOL BUILDINGS

## Federal Investments in School Infrastructure

There are over approximately 100,000 public K-12 school facilities serving our nation's teachers and children across the country. PTA believes that every student—regardless of their family's income—must have access to a safe, welcoming and high-quality public school. The average school building is over 44 years old. Our nation's public schools are the second largest national infrastructure sector for capital investment. Yet, historically, unlike roads and bridges, school facilities have received virtually no federal investment. Given state budget shortfalls and the need for economic recovery, now is the time for the federal government to invest in school infrastructure.

### THE DATA

There are approximately **100,000** public K-12 schools in the U.S.<sup>i</sup>

Every school day, nearly **50 million** K-12 students and six million adults occupy close to 100,000 public-school buildings on an estimated two million acres of land.<sup>ii</sup>

In more than **30%** of public-school facilities, windows, plumbing and HVAC systems are considered in "fair" or "poor" condition.<sup>ii</sup>

A 2016 report on the condition of school facilities that are funded and operated by the federal Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) shows that five of the **13** schools visited for the report are in condemned buildings, meaning that the extent of their disrepair is so great that they cannot be occupied.<sup>iii</sup>

### WE ADVOCATE TO



Address health hazards including poor air quality, substandard heating and cooling equipment, unsafe drinking water supply and lead contamination.



Enhance digital infrastructure to ensure equity.



Redesign schools to meet community needs such as school-based health clinics, after school and summer learning opportunities, and career technical education facilities for children and adults.



Modernize schools, including making them green, so their energy consumption and carbon footprints are reduced.

## VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Two school districts in Washington state—Lake Washington School District (LWSD) and Mercer Island School District—and their corresponding PTSA councils have sustainability programs. Both PTSAs and districts have leveraged the King County Green Schools Program to achieve green building success. The goal of both PTSA councils was to build trust with the district and school personnel over time. District leaders meet with PTA sustainability leaders to discuss projects and progress on a regular basis. They found their best successes at working with food, custodial, building and operational staff to implement changes over time.

They started with easy-to-implement projects at schools, achieved positive results and then tackled larger projects and set district-wide goals. Cost-saving measures were of key interest to school districts. Active involvement from school-level and district-level personnel was critical to setting a long-term vision and accomplishing goals. Two goals both PTSAs had in common with their districts were installing LED bulbs and low-flow water faucets. This sharing of ideas and respect over time led to increased trust in PTA and incorporation of PTA sustainability leaders as trusted advisors in district-wide projects. Because of persistent and respectful advocacy on the part of PTA advocacy leaders, LWSD is considering installing water bottle filling stations in all schools. This would enable students to bring their own bottles and reduce single-use plastic bottles—a tangible, positive way to reduce the use of fossil fuels and mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change.

**Stephanie Lecovin**  
Lake Washington  
PTSA Council

**Susan Baird-Joshi**  
Washington State PTSA



**Nancy Weil**  
Mercer Island PTSA Council



<sup>i</sup> [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_105.50.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_105.50.asp)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Schools-Final.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Office of the Inspector General, "Condition of Indian School Facilities" (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016), available at [https://www.doiig.gov/sites/doiig.gov/files/FinalEval\\_BIESchoolFacilitiesB\\_093016.pdf](https://www.doiig.gov/sites/doiig.gov/files/FinalEval_BIESchoolFacilitiesB_093016.pdf).



# FOSTERING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

## Safe, Supportive and Inclusive Practices in Schools for All Students

All students—including students from historically marginalized populations—have the right to a quality, equitable education in a safe, supportive and inclusive school. We know that every student, regardless of their race, religion, ability or socioeconomic status—can reach their full potential when the school environment is one in which they feel truly valued. PTA advocates for policies and legislation that ensure equity for every student, are grounded in social justice and support the whole child and family.

### THE DATA

Every year in the United States, up to **20%** of children and youth experience a mental, emotional or behavioral disorder. <sup>i</sup>

Positive school climate has been linked to several important outcomes including increased student self-esteem and self-concept, decreased absenteeism, enhanced risk prevention, **reduced** behavioral problems and disciplinary actions (in-school detention and out-of-school suspension), and **increased** school completion. <sup>ii</sup>

The better-developed student social and emotional competencies are, the better students do in school and life. This holds for students from different economic backgrounds, races/ethnicities and genders. <sup>iii</sup>

**71%** of principals report that they have partly or systematically implemented social-emotional learning programs. <sup>iii</sup>

### WE ADVOCATE TO



Provide and connect students with necessary behavioral and mental health resources at school and in their community.



Improve access to and funding for qualified school-based health and wellness practitioners, such as school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists and school social workers.



Encourage schools to use positive school discipline policies and behavioral interventions and supports that are effective, fair and consistently implemented.



Promote social-emotional learning, including resources for families to support this critical practice at home.

## VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Schools are places where much more than academic skills are acquired. Delaware PTA began advocating for elementary school wellness centers when their former Attorney General Matt Denn proposed a set of initiatives and funding to help students in high-poverty elementary schools. Elementary school-based wellness centers provide not only wellness services but immunizations, dental exams, eye exams and sick visits. They also provide critical wrap around services, along with mental health counseling and trauma-informed healthcare. To promote the creation and funding of these centers in high-poverty elementary schools, Delaware PTA mobilized its membership statewide to contact legislators and testify at Legislative Hall in their state capitol. Delaware PTA engaged in coalition building with the Colonial School District, and two legislative champions emerged: Rep. Kim Williams and Rep. Val Longhurst. Legislation passed the Delaware House and Senate and was signed by the Governor, eventually funding two elementary school wellness centers for one year. There are now seven wellness centers in elementary school settings that are state recognized school-based health service provider sites. Delaware PTA remains vigilant in its advocacy as funding for these wellness centers continues to be of concern and the benefits of these centers are worth fighting for.



**Sarah Bucic**  
Delaware PTA



<sup>i</sup> <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Mental-Health-Needs-Assessment-Brief-September-2017.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Cohen, J., McCabe, E., Michelli, N., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 111, 180-213.  
<sup>iii</sup> Conley, D. T. (2010). *College and career ready: Helping all students succeed beyond high school*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>iv</sup> [https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/AWG-State-of-the-Field-Report\\_2019\\_DIGITAL\\_Final.pdf](https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/AWG-State-of-the-Field-Report_2019_DIGITAL_Final.pdf)



Family engagement has been at the heart of National PTA’s mission since the association’s founding in 1897. Through advocacy—most recently our successful campaign to include family engagement provisions such as the Statewide Family Engagement Centers program in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—as well as family and community education, National PTA has established programs and called for legislation that includes parents and families in every step of the decision-making process.

Parents and their children are the primary consumers of our nation’s public education system, and over 40 years of data shows that family engagement in schools has a drastic impact on student achievement and school improvement. However, many states and school districts need to make more investments in family engagement and ensure parents should have a seat at the table when decisions are made and work with parents and families as partners throughout the school year.

**THE DATA**

According to a study conducted by Rice University, only **34%** of parents were currently satisfied with family and community engagement in public schools <sup>[1]</sup>

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Each year parents took part in a family engagement program in Chicago, their child’s chances of completing high school increased by **16%**. When parents were involved for the whole six years of the program, more than **80%** of their children graduated from high school, compared with **38%** of students whose parents did not participate <sup>[2]</sup>

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Students with engaged families attend school more regularly, earn better grades, enroll in advanced level programs and have higher graduation rates <sup>[3]</sup>

.....

Schools would need to increase spending by more than **\$1,000** per student to gain the same results as effective family engagement <sup>[4]</sup>

**WE ADVOCATE TO**



Ensure state and local education agencies and schools use federal funding to support evidence-based family engagement programs as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)



Ensure effective implementation of the Statewide Family Education Centers (SFECs) program on both the federal and state levels



Provide ongoing training and professional development on effective family engagement practices for educators and school-based personnel



Include evidence-based family engagement strategies throughout the entire education continuum from early childhood through postsecondary exploration and career opportunities



Support meaningful engagement of parents and families at the state, district and school level, on an ongoing basis, in the creation of education policies, especially those that directly impact students and families

## VOICE FROM THE FIELD

When Heather Losneck got the news that she was selected as a National PTA Family Engagement Fellow, she immediately contacted the Board of Education President in her school district in Berea, Ohio to push forward a family engagement agenda. Initially working in a small committee, **Losneck proposed that the Board of Education adopt a district-wide family engagement policy** to raise awareness about the power of family engagement and cultivate family engagement through specific programs and practices.

As a result of Losneck's decision to **take action**, the board created a Family Engagement Team comprised of parents, family members, teachers, school staff and administrators and board of education members. This team represents every school in the district, every grade level, and every city. The vision for this team is to create system-wide policies and practices that establish effective family-school partnerships to improve student achievement.

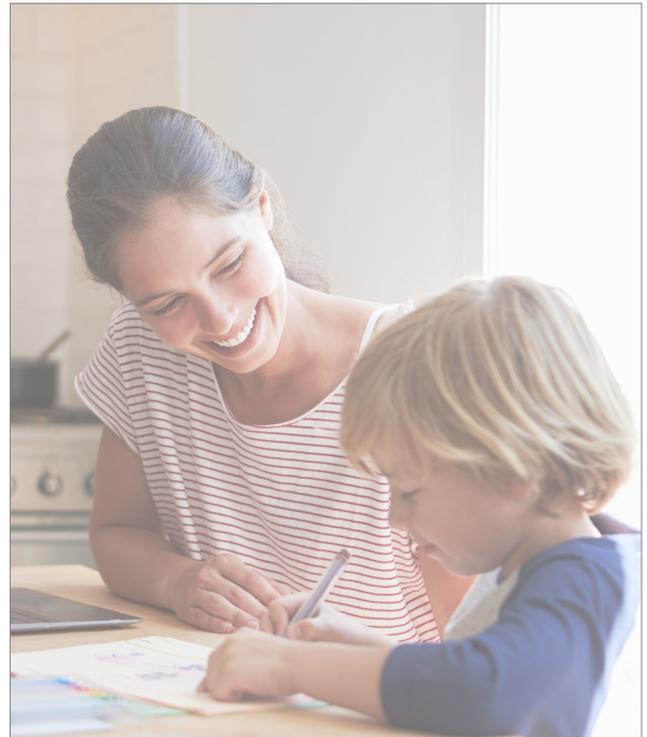
The team is also piloting a Parent Academy to empower parents and families to be strong advocates for public education and family engagement by learning more about the role of the school district and leadership, learning curriculums, assessments, school finances, funding and operations.



**Heather Losneck**  
Berea-Midpark Middle  
School PTA

## ABOUT STATEWIDE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTERS

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law by President Obama in December 2015, includes the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program. SFECs provide states and districts with the capacity to support effective family engagement policies and initiatives. They also provide training and guidance to help parents and families become equal partners with educators in improving their child's academic achievement. Recently, the program received \$10 million in funding, with eleven states receiving grants to start a Statewide Family Engagement Center. To learn more about SFEC program and recent grantees, visit <https://innovation.ed.gov/statewide-family-engagement-centers-program/>



<sup>[1]</sup> Rice University. (2017). [Rice U. study: Public schools lagging in family and community engagement](#). Houston, TX: Rice University

<sup>[2]</sup> National Education Association. (2008). [Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Education](#). Washington, DC: National Education Association

<sup>[3]</sup> Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). [A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement](#). Annual Synthesis 2002. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools.

<sup>[4]</sup> Houtenville, A. and K.S. Conway. (2008). [Parental Effort, School Resources, and Student Achievement](#). Journal of Human Resources, XLIII. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.



## HELPING ALL CHILDREN REACH THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL

### Federal Investments in Education

The long-term success of our nation depends on quality federal investments in our education system. National PTA has long-advocated to ensure children have access to adequately funded public schools that improve their overall well-being and allow students to reach their full potential. From a lack of student support and mental health services to crumbling school infrastructure, there have been far too many children left with insufficient resources, which is why National PTA and its members advocate to ensure schools have the proper resources needed to help children learn, grow and succeed.

#### THE DATA

Federal funding for public education programs has remained at **2%** of the federal budget for decades, despite the increase in public school enrollment and the rising cost of education resources and services <sup>[1]</sup>

In 2015, **29** states were still providing less total school funding per student than they were in 2008 <sup>[2]</sup>

According to a 2018 report <sup>[3]</sup>, school districts with the highest rates of poverty receive about **\$1,000** less per student in state and local funding than those with the lowest rates of poverty

A **20%** increase in per-pupil spending for low-income children can lead to an additional year of completed education, **25%** higher earnings and a **20%** reduction in the incidence of poverty in adulthood <sup>[3]</sup>

#### WE ADVOCATE TO



Increase funding for family engagement programs and activities, such as the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program and Parent Training and Information (PTI) Centers, to help all schools engage more families in their child's education



Ensure programs that support low-income students and students with special needs, such as Title I and IDEA, receive substantial funding



Invest in programs that provide students with a well-rounded education and a safe learning environment, including programs that support access to arts, technology, vocational, advanced education opportunities, as well as violence prevention programs and psychological support services



Provide funding for qualified school-based health and wellness practitioners, such as school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists and school social workers

## VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Colorado's unique system of education funding makes it exceedingly difficult to generate revenue for public schools. When Evie Hudak saw a proposed ballot initiative to increase school funding by 20%, she knew she had to **take action** to get the initiative added to the ballot. Evie quickly organized her fellow Jeffco Council PTA members to educate families and community members statewide about the amendment and the serious lack of school funding that made it necessary.

As an incentive to get local PTA units involved, Evie worked with Colorado PTA to create the PTA Amendment 73 Star Award, which would be given to PTA units that mobilized the most PTA members to register to vote and advocate on behalf of the initiative. **The signatures collected far exceeded minimum requirements, and Colorado PTA's advocacy efforts helped secure Amendment 73 on the 2018 ballot.** Colorado PTA continues to advocate for increased funding in education and works with local communities to raise awareness on the issue.



**Evie Hudak**  
Jeffco Council PTA

## COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION FUNDING

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF) was founded in 1969 to help achieve adequate federal funding for our nation's educational system. National PTA is one of CEF's original 100+ member organizations which provides a strong and unified voice in support of increasing the federal investment in education. National PTA believes that funding for education should be a top priority of the federal government because it is an investment in the future of this nation. To learn more about CEF and its recent work, visit [CEF.org](http://CEF.org).



<sup>[1]</sup> National PTA. (2017). [Stop Cuts to Classrooms Campaign Toolkit](#). Alexandria, VA: National PTA

<sup>[2]</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2017). [A Punishing Decade for School Funding](#). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

<sup>[3]</sup> C. Kirabo Jackson, Rucker C. Johnson, and Claudia Persico, "The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, October 1, 2015.



No parent should fear for the safety of their child every time they leave home. But all too often, young lives are destroyed or changed forever due to gun violence and other forms of violence in the places our children should be the most safe—their communities. More must be done immediately to protect our nation’s most vulnerable population. It’s up to all of us—community members, parents, educators and other child well-being advocates—to work together to prevent gun violence. That’s why PTA members advocate, year after year, for sensible gun safety and violence prevention policies that will help keep children safe and sound.

### THE DATA

Since 2013, there have been at least **347** incidents of gunfire on school grounds in America <sup>[1]</sup>

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Firearms are the second leading cause of death for American children and teens, with nearly **1,600** children and teens dying by gun homicide every year <sup>[2]</sup>

.....

Approximately **three million** American children witness gun violence every year <sup>[2]</sup>

.....

Children exposed to violence, crime and abuse are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol; suffer from depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder; fail or have difficulties in school and engage in criminal activity <sup>[1]</sup>

### WE ADVOCATE TO



Fund federally funded research on the causes and effects of gun violence on youth and communities, as well as evidence-based strategies to reduce gun violence



Establish education programs to teach students, parents and community members about gun safety and violence prevention



Require a waiting period and comprehensive background check for all individuals prior to buying a firearm



Restrict internet gun sales, including kits that can be used to make and modify guns



Ban access to military-style semi-automatic assault weapons

## VOICE FROM THE FIELD

In 2018, tragedy struck the state of Florida when 17 students lost their lives in a senseless mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County. In the aftermath of such a horrific event, even as vigils were being held and funerals were attended, Angie Gallo knew she needed to **take action**.

Florida PTA was already known as a fierce advocate on gun safety and violence prevention measures following the shooting at the Pulse nightclub in 2016. As a result of their exemplary advocacy work, Angie was invited to represent the parent voice on Governor Scott's education working group, which was formed to develop a more comprehensive school safety policy. **The Governor's recommended school safety plan incorporated many of the proposals Angie discussed with her fellow members during the working group meeting.** After this plan was released, the Florida Legislature drafted a bill that would end up putting \$400 million dollars into schools for safety and mental health.



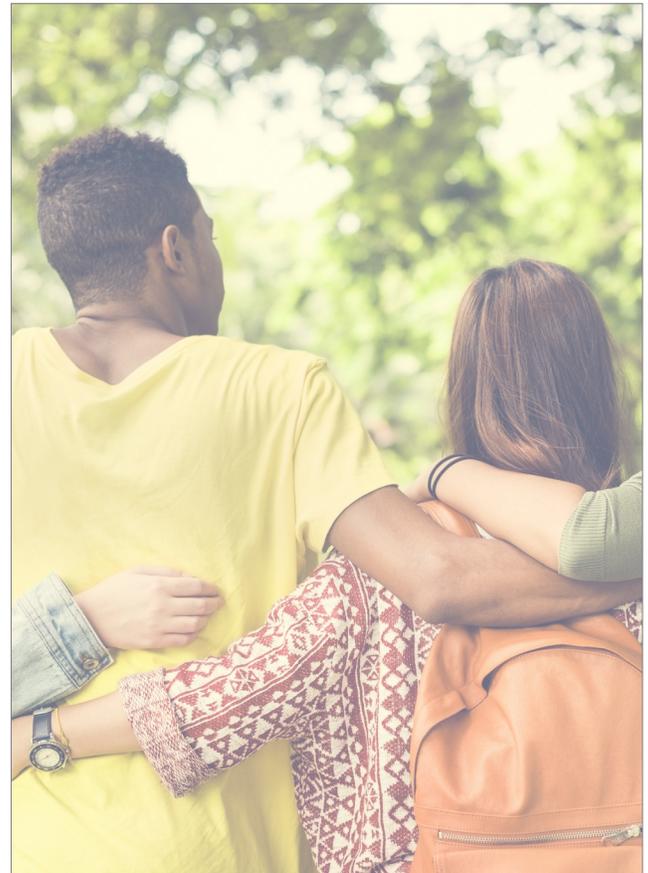
**Angie Gallo**  
Florida PTA

## ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

"We have all watched in horror as our country has experienced far too many gun-related tragedies. We need immediate change.

It is urgent that we work together to enact bipartisan policy solutions and make meaningful changes to keep our children safe. Every student deserves to learn and grow in a safe environment."

-Statement from National PTA President,  
Jim Accomando



<sup>[1]</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. (2018). [Gunfire on school grounds in the United States](#). New York, NY.

<sup>[2]</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety (2018). [Gun violence in America](#). New York, NY.



## A HEALTHIER FUTURE

### Child Nutrition

Healthy children learn better and are more productive—both in and out of the classroom. Setting strong nutritional standards in our nation's schools is essential to combating the concerning obesity rates among American children. Providing our nation's youth with healthy food options and nutrition education is key to their long-term health and success, which is why National PTA supports policies that build healthy eating habits and ensure a brighter and healthier future for our children.

#### THE DATA

From 1970-2000, child obesity rates nearly tripled, and the current percentage of obese youth remains high at approximately **19%** <sup>[1]</sup>

Childhood obesity is a strong predictor of adult obesity, which has well-known health and economic consequences, both for the individual and society <sup>[2]</sup>

Serving healthy meals at school has been shown to increase student test performance by **3-4%** <sup>[3]</sup>

Approximately **6.5 million** children live in areas that are more than one mile away from a supermarket <sup>[4]</sup>

#### WE ADVOCATE TO



Ensure students in need have access to federal nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program



Protect child well-being by maintaining nutrition standards in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010



Encourage healthier eating habits by promoting and increasing access to nutrition education and awareness programs for parents, youth and communities



Empower parents and families to work with their schools to improve local school wellness policies that address student nutrition and physical activity

## VOICE FROM THE FIELD

For years, Colorado PTA has made a strong commitment to addressing child health issues, including rising obesity rates and growing disparities in children’s access to nutritious food. In spring 2016, former Colorado PTA State President Michelle Winzent decided to ramp up COPTA’s advocacy on nutrition and **take action**.

Michelle helped Colorado PTA partner with Action for Healthy Kids and secure a grant for 40 Wellness Kits from the Colorado Health Foundation. The kits contained resources, materials and prizes for schools to host activities on health and nutrition education. **To help schools and districts use the Wellness Kits, Colorado PTA launched an advocacy campaign to educate schools and parents on how to maximize information in the Wellness Kits to improve their child’s health.** The advocacy campaign included workshops, in-person meetings and webinar trainings for families, teachers and school leaders.

By June 2018, Colorado PTA had engaged over 40 schools in 19 school districts on the importance of healthy eating habits and well-being. Their trainings received positive feedback from parents, who noted how Colorado PTA’s advocacy had improved their knowledge about nutrition.



**Michelle Winzent**  
Colorado PTA

## HEALTHY HUNGER-FREE KIDS ACT

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 authorized funding and set policy for the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) core child nutrition programs: the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. The bill allows USDA to make reforms to the school lunch and breakfast programs by improving the critical nutrition and hunger safety net for millions of children.



<sup>[1]</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (2018). [Childhood Obesity Facts](#). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<sup>[2]</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). (2016). [Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity](#). Geneva, Switzerland: The Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity

<sup>[3]</sup> Anderson, M., Gallagher, J., Ritchie Ramirez, Elizabeth. (2017). [School Lunch Quality and Academic Performance](#). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research

<sup>[4]</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (2018). [Facts and Statistics](#). Washington, DC: President’s Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition