

# The PTA Guide to Breaking Through Language Barriers

National PTA believes in embracing diversity to effectively represent the wide variety of cultures and languages served.

While language can be a barrier when trying to be inclusive, it can be easily addressed with the help of a translator. There may be volunteers available that can help with written and/or verbal translations.

Follow these steps to get access to an effective translator!

## Step 1: Consider which languages to translate

- Ask your school administrators or a local government office what languages are spoken in your community.\*

*\*Keep in mind there may be many different languages spoken in your community. If that's the case, consider translating the more commonly spoken languages first.*

## Step 2: Look within your community

- Reach out to parents, teachers and community members to see if they are comfortable translating or if they know someone who could.
- Reach out to students who are native speakers and offer community service hours in exchange for their translating services. They might be interested in joining PTA, too!
- Many schools offer a foreign language class. Ask the foreign language teacher for help and invite them to join PTA!
- Check with your school district to see if there is a language line that can facilitate translations over the phone.
- Ask your state PTA if they have partnerships with translation organizations or if there are board or committee members who can offer support.
- If you are a Title 1 school, see if the administration is willing to spend some of the school's Title 1 funds for translations. Offering materials and events in multiple languages is a great way to engage families.
- See if you have a parent center onsite at your school with staff that are bilingual and willing to help.
- Ask retired educators if they are interested in volunteering their time to assist with translations.
- For in-person meetings, see if your school or school district has a translation system they loan out for school-related activities. Often there is no fee, but you will need someone who knows how to use the system and someone who can provide simultaneous translations.

## Step 3: Connect with outside organizations

- Community centers, libraries or local churches may have bilingual staff or volunteers.
- Ask courthouses and hospitals who their translators are and if they'd be interested in volunteering with your PTA.
- If you have a nearby university, foreign language majors or exchange students may need community service hours.
- Consider translation certification programs and see if their students need practice hours.
- Some local government offices may have an immigrant affairs office that can help.
- Use google translate. While it may not provide perfect translations, it can help.

## Other tips:

\* Once you have a translator, it may be worth investing in your own translation system.

\* Offer the National PTA Spanish Translation & Style Guide as a resource to facilitate translations.

\* Visit [PTA.org/SpanishResources](http://PTA.org/SpanishResources) or [PTA.org/RecursosEnEspañol](http://PTA.org/RecursosEnEspañol) for Spanish documents.