

Program Leader Guide

Welcome and congratulations on enrolling in the National PTA School of Excellence program!

By enrolling in the program, your PTA and school administrators make a year-long commitment to identify and implement an action plan for school improvement based on National PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and informed by National PTA's Center for Family Engagement.

The School of Excellence Leader Guide is designed to help your PTA partner with your school leaders, families, students and community members to improve and promote family-school partnerships.

School of Excellence Program Goals and Objectives

The goal of the School of Excellence program is **to enrich the educational experience and overall well-being of students**. The School of Excellence program aims to:

- Provide a framework for PTAs to **identify and implement best practices in family engagement** to strengthen family-school partnerships.
- **Build inclusive and welcoming school communities** where all families contribute to enriching the educational experience and overall well-being for all students.
- Help PTAs **attract new, action-oriented PTA members** who want to focus on the issues that affect our children the most.
- **Provide step-by-step guidance and networking opportunities** for PTAs to gain support and feedback, identify and reach goals and earn recognition.
- **Celebrate designees** and top [Phoebe Apperson Hearst awardees](#) as national leaders in building effective family-school partnerships, which opens additional honors and opportunities.

You will achieve that goal by completing several program steps designed to help your PTA form family-school partnerships that strengthen family engagement in supporting student and school success.

School of Excellence Program Steps

Step #1: Enroll and Get Started

Enroll by October 15

After enrolling in the National PTA School of Excellence program, you can get started by building an inclusive "Excellence Team." **When recruiting volunteers, consider building a diverse team that is representative of your entire school community.** Try to have members that represent families, administrators, staff, student leaders (depending on age) and community members. Diversity enriches the process by bringing a variety of perspectives, connections and ideas to the table.

Toward the beginning of the school year and throughout the school, your Excellence Team will work together to gather community feedback using the community feedback resources provided by National PTA. **The community feedback questions and guides are based on National PTA's [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: Welcome All Families, Communicate Effectively, Support Student Success, Speak Up For Every Child, Share Power and Collaborate With The Community.](#)**

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Step #2: Gather and Analyze Community Feedback

August – November 15

The method of how you deploy the community feedback questions—survey or listening sessions—will be dependent on what works best for your PTA, school and family members. However, **you are asked to use the provided questions to ensure your efforts are rooted in the [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#).**

After you compile feedback from your school community, the next step is to work with your Excellence Team and school administrator(s) to analyze and discuss what you have learned and ways that your PTA can better engage families throughout the year.

Through your discussion, **you will pick one focus area for family engagement that you plan to concentrate on in the upcoming school year: improve education; health, safety and well-being or diversity, equity and inclusion.** Within that broad focus area, choose one specific National Standard and goal/s that best describes how you will support efforts. This will help you direct and align your work specifically to your community feedback and the [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#).

Find a breakdown of the Focus Areas and Objectives at the end of this guide.

Once you have analyzed your community feedback and determined your shared goals and indicators with your Excellence Team and school administrator(s), you will complete the Community Feedback Form to share with National PTA who you listened to, what you heard and how you will use this information to improve your school community. **Only forms submitted online by the November 15 deadline will be able to move forward in the program and remain in consideration for the School of Excellence designation.**

Step 3: Build an Excellence Action Plan and Check Back with Your Community

Throughout the school year

Based on your community feedback and goals, you will build an Excellence Action Plan to strengthen family-school partnerships in your selected focus area. Your action plan will be aligned to your community feedback and the [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#). You are not required to use a specific format or submit your action plan, as it will be unique to your school community and feedback. However, you will have the opportunity to share your plans with National PTA through an optional form.

Along with webinars and training and dedicated support from National PTA, you will have access to an online roadmap that will help you deepen your work. And, as priorities shift throughout the school year, don't be afraid to reassess and revise your action plan in partnership with school and PTA leadership. National PTA is with you every step of the way!

Toward the end of the school year, once the bulk of your Excellence Action Plan is complete, **you will deploy a final survey or convene additional listening sessions to give the community an opportunity to share their perspectives on the initiatives you have implemented.**

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As before, the method of how you deploy the community feedback questions—survey or listening sessions—will be dependent on what works best for your PTA, school and family members. You are, again, asked to use the provided questions to ensure your efforts are rooted in the [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#).

Step #4: Reflect On and Summarize Progress

May 1 – June 15

Once gathered, your Excellence Team and administrators will meet to analyze the community feedback, discuss your greatest accomplishments in the program and set a new family engagement goal that you will concentrate on in the following school year. You will then complete the Community Impact Form.

This will be your opportunity to share with National PTA what you've done to enhance your community's approach within your selected focus area and demonstrate the impact you've made. You will also share the new community feedback you collected by sharing your key takeaways.

To remain in consideration for the School of Excellence designation, you must submit your PTA's application by June 15. Only applications submitted online by the due date will be considered for this cycle of award recipients.

Over the summer, a team of National PTA volunteers will review applications for completion to receive the National School of Excellence designation. Designated Schools of Excellence that meet a specific threshold and make significant improvements in strengthening their family-school partnership will automatically qualify for consideration of the prestigious Phoebe Apperson Hearst Awards, which are the highest honor National PTA presents for effective family engagement!

Step #5. Celebrate Your Excellence

August

By mid-August, National PTA will announce the PTAs who are designated as National PTA Schools of Excellence, as well as the three PTAs that earned the [Phoebe Apperson Hearst Awards](#). Those who earn the designation will receive a banner and certificate, as well as a digital celebration toolkit to help celebrate their designation in their communities.

National PTA also provides opportunities for Schools of Excellence to act as leaders in the field of family-school partnerships. **Being a National PTA School of Excellence will open the door to other honors and opportunities for your school.** With your National PTA School of Excellence banner hanging prominently at your school, families know right away—you are welcome here and you are important to our students' success!

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NEED HELP? National PTA helps you every step of the way with templates, training and tools. Visit [PTA.org/ExcellenceTools](https://pta.org/ExcellenceTools) or email Excellence@PTA.org with specific questions.

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School of Excellence Program Focus Areas, National PTA Standards, and Goals

Within that your chosen focus area (i.e., Improve Education, Health, Safety and Well-being and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) choose one specific National Standard and goal/s that best describes how you will support efforts.

Standard 1 – Welcome All Families

- **Goal 1:** Build a Community of Belonging: When families engage with the school and PTA, do they feel respected, understood and connected to the school community?
- **Goal 2:** Create an Inclusive Environment: Do the school's and PTA's efforts encourage engagement with and among the diversity of families in the community?

Standard 2 – Communicate Effectively

- **Goal 1:** Exchange Information Between School and Families: Are families able to receive and share information in culturally and linguistically sustaining ways?
- **Goal 2:** Facilitate Parent-Teacher Communication: Does the school and PTA promote communication between families and teachers?

Standard 3 – Support Student Success

- **Goal 1:** Team-Up For Student Success: Are families, students and educators on the same page about how students are progressing?
- **Goal 2:** Support Learning by Engaging Families: Are families valued partners in their children's learning at home and at school?

Standard 4 – Speak Up for Every Child

- **Goal 1:** Navigate the School System: Are families knowledgeable and able to raise questions or concerns about their child's educational experience?
- **Goal 2:** Address inequitable outcomes and access. Does the school and PTA remove barriers for families to be advocates for and with students'—particularly those who are most marginalized?

Standard 5 – Share Power

- **Goal 1:** Strengthen the Family's Voice in Shared Decision Making: Are families partners in making decisions that affect their children at school and in the community?
- **Goal 2:** Build Families' Connections: Do families have a strong, broad-based organization that offers regular opportunities to develop relationships and raise concerns with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders?

Standard 6 – Collaborate with Community

- **Goal 1:** Build a Strong Foundation for Community Partnerships: Does the school and PTA have a plan for when and how to engage community partners?
- **Goal 2:** Connect the School with Community Partners: Do family and school leaders work closely with community organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education?