

COVID-19 RELIEF CASE STUDY

PTA Leaders as Influencers

Grant Relief for PTAs



NATIONAL PTA COVID-19 RELIEF SUMMARY

School communities faced an overwhelming level of need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this sustained moment of crisis, National PTA® was there—working for our nation’s students, families, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders. With funding from TikTok and other corporate partners, National PTA awarded \$1,385,000 in COVID-19 Relief Grants to local and regional PTAs across the country.

\$1,385,000

total dollars distributed to PTA
communities nationwide

538,000

people impacted

Distribution by Key Area



22.4%
Food Security



14.5%
Internet & Device Access

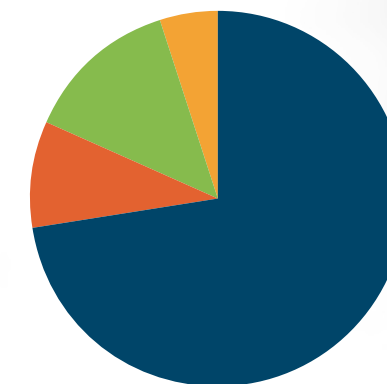


19.2%
Distance Learning



43.9%
Mental Health/Social and
Emotional Support

Distribution by School Level



72.7%
Elementary

13.4%
High

9.1%
Middle

4.8%
N/A (District/Council/
Region or State PTA)

PTAS ARE COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

Schools provide so much more than education: good nutrition, childcare, access to technology, mental health services and more. This is what makes them central to any community.

That's also why local Parent Teacher Associations® and Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTAs/PTSAs) were well-positioned to address some of the biggest challenges that were caused or worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the support of National PTA and its corporate partners, hundreds of PTAs across the country tackled key issues, including food insecurity, distance learning, technology access and social and emotional well-being in 2020.

It takes relentless dedication, ingenuity and resourcefulness to make a difference. PTA and PTSA leaders know how to leverage connections, build

bridges and turn vision into action—while inspiring others to join them. Here are just a few examples of PTA influence from our COVID-19 Relief Grant efforts.

“It was always a bright spot, hearing these impact stories and talking with National PTA about the great work they were doing ... It brought it home that TikTok was really helping our neighbors, our friends, our colleagues, the people we see at religious services and sports, and so on.”

– Eric Ebenstein, Director of Public Policy, TikTok



A PLACE OF THEIR OWN

Woodstock High School PTSA: Woodstock, Ga.

- ◆ **Over 2,200 students enrolled**
- ◆ **62% White; 18% Hispanic/Latino;
12% Black; 3% Asian**
- ◆ **5.4% English Language Learners**

Like most U.S. schools, Woodstock High School closed in March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The school planned to reopen in August—but the experience would be much different for returning students, with masks, germ barriers, social distancing and other safety measures in place.

Woodstock students greeted the changes with a mix of trepidation and excitement, layered on top of the daily stress they already experience keeping up with their academics and extracurriculars.

Tawnya Velzy and her fellow PTSA leaders had a solution: Create a safe, inviting space on campus where students could find balance and rejuvenate. She had her eye on a large, neglected patio right outside the cafeteria. With some TLC, she knew they could transform the patio into a place for students to hit the “pause” button.

With a \$5,000 COVID-19 Relief Grant from National PTA and TikTok, Velzy began recruiting other members of the community to bring that vision to life.

What happened next was a true collaborative effort. The Woodstock PTSA involved the principal, special education team, counselors, Student Government Association and other school leaders. As Velzy sought additional perspectives from her family and neighbors, more and more people heard about the project through the grapevine.



Then three unexpected community partners emerged. One, a Woodstock parent who works as a general contractor, helped the PTSA narrow down their options for redesigning the patio within budget. He then volunteered to assemble all the patio furniture that had been ordered: enough tables and seating to enforce social distancing, plus umbrellas to protect students from the hot Georgia sun.

The second was a Woodstock alumnus who runs his own landscaping business. He donated his time to design a beautiful natural environment for students to enjoy—and was eager to give back to the school that had given him so much. Finally, a local nursery garden center worked with the PTSA to minimize the cost of plants for the patio space, including generously donating a palm tree. “The contributions of these community partners have truly helped move our efforts forward,” Velzy shares.

What’s more, she adds, “[This project] changed their opinion of PTSA. We actually do impactful things in our community that affect our students. I think we’re really changing the false perception, this year especially.”

All summer long, the PTSA coordinated meetings, emails and conference calls to keep the patio renovation on track. On top of the National PTA grant, the Woodstock

PTSA contributed \$2,000 of its own funds to complete the project. Today, the patio offers Woodstock students a sense of normalcy. They can look forward to relaxing in the space before classes and during lunchtime. They are safely reconnecting with friends and rebuilding the personal relationships that were severed so abruptly in the early days of the pandemic.

The renovated patio is what Velzy calls a “legacy item”—a permanent contribution to the school that demonstrates to students that their mental health and well-being truly matters. The leaders wondered whether anyone would show up to the parent check-ins on Zoom—but they certainly did!

Before long, family members, alumni, teachers and other community members were stepping up to lead the various virtual classes. (The Zumba coach is actually the school librarian!) A reader’s theater club, karaoke club and game club emerged. In all, over 1,000 children, adults and staff benefitted from the grant.

“The fact that PTSA realized that this project is an important need in our school is really AMAZING!”

– Woodstock High School Teacher



Up next for Woodstock is an indoor quiet area, made possible by a \$2,500 continuation grant from National PTA and Mathnasium. Located in the media center, this will be a space where students can decompress, listen to music, meditate, even take a 20-minute power nap during the school day. The PTSA is purchasing new furniture and other items to make the room warm and comfortable.

MAKING ROOM FOR WELLNESS

Bonneville Elementary School: Orem, Utah

- 📍 Public Title I school
- 📍 500 students enrolled
- 📍 45% of students receive free and reduced lunch

Can a group of parent volunteers respond to a public health crisis? Drive professional development for school staff? How about designate a brand-new Wellness Center in their elementary school—the first of its kind in the district?

For the Bonneville Elementary School PTA, the answer is yes. These leaders accomplished all this and more with their \$5,000 COVID-19 Relief Grant from National PTA and TikTok.

Utah has one of the country's highest suicide rates, and the pandemic threatened to escalate the mental health needs already facing the Bonneville community. PTA

President Cami Heaton and her fellow leaders wanted to make meaningful changes in how the school addressed anxiety, stress and other big emotions for their students. First, the PTA paid for the school's counselor and behavioral specialist to attend a training on promoting wellness through self-regulation. These learnings were shared with the entire faculty.

Then, they transformed an unused classroom into a Wellness Center. As Heaton puts it, this is a place where students can take a break during the school day, refocus their thoughts and behaviors, and “turn their thinking brains back on.” Families also have access to evidence-based materials to help them manage mental health at home and in the community.



The Wellness Center has proven so popular that other local PTAs have asked to tour it, so they can recreate the interventions in their own schools. Thanks to PTA leadership, Bonneville's young students are empowered to take charge of their mental well-being, without fear or shame.

“[PTA leaders] bring all of our life experiences to the table, combined with our desire to really help and make an impact for the kids. It’s amazing what happens and how it flourishes, under that much care and concern.”

– Cami Heaton, PTA president

REIMAGINING STEM EDUCATION

Paul Duke STEM High School PTSA: Norcross, Ga.

- ♦ **Public Title I school**
- ♦ **1,100 students enrolled**
- ♦ **68% of students receive free and reduced lunch**
- ♦ **51% of students come from Spanish-speaking families**
- ♦ **70% of students initially chose remote learning for the 2020-2021 school year**
- ♦ **67% of students impacted by the National PTA COVID-19 Relief Grant**

At Paul Duke STEM High School, students from across the learning spectrum enroll in rigorous math and science courses and a wide range of college and career readiness programs. But when classes went virtual in spring 2020, some students started falling behind—especially in hands-on disciplines like biology, physics and engineering. This problem is what kept the principal and other school leaders up at night.

Going into the 2020-2021 school year, the Paul Duke PTSA wanted to support teachers and help students achieve in the virtual classroom. With the \$5,000 COVID-19 Relief Grant from National PTA and TikTok, Tina Budnitz and her fellow PTSA leaders developed 640 at-home science experiment kits to help teachers engage both “roomers” and “Zoomers.” They also put the money toward redesigning the engineering Maker Space so it could be safely accessed by both in-person learners and digital learners after hours. The engineering students then designed and built picnic tables for an outdoor classroom that now serves as a meeting place for other classes, student clubs and school events.

The PTSA didn’t stop there. With remaining grant funds, they helped stock the bathrooms with much-needed personal care items and purchased grocery store gift cards for each of the school’s homeless students.





At Paul Duke, \$5,000 went a long way toward helping the school remain innovative and connected in the face of extraordinary challenges. “I just want to thank National PTA and the sponsors. In the global economy it might not seem like a lot of money, but it really was at a time that we couldn’t fundraise,” Budnitz emphasizes. “The impact on our community was huge.”

“The power of the PTA is that we’re extenders. We help keep the community together. We can help teachers reach their curricular goals when they need an extra set of hands.”

– Tina Budnitz, PTSA leader

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts, please call the **free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)**.

For food assistance, **find your local food bank at FeedingAmerica.org**.

Learn more about the power
of the PTA at **PTA.org**.



National Office
1250 North Pitt Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 518-1200
info@PTA.org