

Inclusive Curriculum and Educational Materials Guidance and Messaging for PTAs

This document seeks to provide information on National PTA’s position and response to inquiries on inclusive curriculum and educational materials. PTA leaders are encouraged to use the messaging in this document to guide their own responses to their membership, partner organizations, stakeholders, and media on this issue.

About Inclusive Curriculum

According to the Glossary of Education Reform, the term “curriculum” refers to “the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards or learning objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning.”¹

An inclusive curriculum addresses the needs of *all* students and reflects a wide variety of diverse histories, experiences, and concepts such that every student and family feels included, welcomed, respected, and valued as part of the school community. As the U.S. population and student body become increasingly more diverse, it is important that k-12 schools offer inclusive curricula, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, and materials that are free of bias to provide all students with the knowledge and skills to thrive in a multicultural, global society.

National PTA represents parents, caregivers, educators and communities of all children. Our collective backgrounds, perspectives and ideas allow us to best reflect the rich fabric of 21st century children, families, educators and community members and create the strongest future and direction for PTA. Our mission — to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children — requires that diversity, equity and inclusion be central to our work and used in our day-to-day decisions and actions.

¹ See “Glossary of Education Reform: Curriculum.” Great Schools Partnership.
<https://www.edglossary.org/curriculum/>

National PTA's Related Positions

In September 2020, National PTA's Board of Directors adopted a [position statement on Inclusive Curricula in K-12 Education](#), which expresses our association's commitment to the creation and implementation of diverse and inclusive curricula in K-12 schools as well as the necessary accompanying professional development that supports culturally and linguistically-responsive teaching and learning so that the history and experience of all students—including but not limited to African American, Latino(a), Native American, Asian, LGBTQ+, and historically targeted and marginalized groups—is accurately represented and taught. National PTA's Board of Directors adopted additional language strengthening the statement in October 2022 to encompass historically targeted and marginalized groups beyond those expressly listed, adding the "+" to LGBTQ, and clarifying that professional development in the context of inclusive curricula should include new opportunities for personalized professional learning, micro-credentialing, and strategies to build skills and plans for delivery and implementation of the curricula.

In 2003, National PTA's Board of Directors adopted a [position statement on Libraries and Educational Material](#), which explains our association's support for reading materials for children and youth that are age and developmentally appropriate, factually correct, historically accurate, and free of censorship based on bias, partisanship or doctrinal disapproval. The position also urges schools to welcome parent input and feedback during the evaluation, selection and adoption and removal procedures for reading materials. In November 2022, the Board of Directors updated the position statement, adding that materials should be historically accurate, factually correct, inclusive, and age and developmentally appropriate as well as clarifying our association's support for the role of parents, teachers, and school librarians in choosing educational reading materials for children.

National PTA's Board of Directors also adopted a [position statement on Addressing Systemic or Institutional Racism](#) in July 2020, which states that our association strongly urges federal, state and local public officials to invest in educating students and teachers on the history and impact of institutional racism. The position statement also indicates that our association believes professional development and training must be provided for all school staff on implicit bias and culturally appropriate curriculum.

National PTA believes that schools should be a safe, supportive and respectful environment for all students, and in 2016 a [resolution on the Recognition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning \(LGBTQ\) Individuals as a Protected Class](#) was considered and adopted by voting delegates at the Annual Convention & Expo in Orlando, Florida. The resolution calls for incorporating age-appropriate, medically

accurate and culturally sensitive information on LGBTQ issues into existing health and other appropriate curricula and recognizes that education regarding LGBTQ issues increases understanding and cultivates acceptance of and respect for LGBTQ children and youth.

In 1996, National PTA’s Board of Directors also adopted a [position statement on The Education of Students with Disabilities](#) which calls for adaptations in the general curriculum to meet the individualized needs of students with disabilities, for example, through the use of supplemental materials, special remedial teaching for students falling behind in work, cooperative learning opportunities, and changes in core curriculum materials. The position statement emphasizes that all students benefit from education that values and practices the recognition and support of including non-disabled children in the same classroom as disabled children and that inclusion, as a means for implementing the least restrictive environment, works only when the curriculum is changed to meet the needs of all children.

National PTA also has a [position statement on Shared Responsibility in Educational Decision Making](#), which outlines that National PTA supports the concept of shared responsibility in the development of school policies and in curriculum decisions, and that PTA urges all school boards to cooperate with parents, teachers, students, principals, administrators, business, civic and community leaders, and the general public in this process.

National PTA’s goal is to clearly state what we believe is in the best interest of our students while avoiding the polarizing debates that are more about politics than education.

Key Talking Points

- Students need access to information in order to explore and experience the diversity of ideas in a pluralistic society. Classrooms that celebrate diverse histories and cultures break down existing barriers and create supportive and inclusive schools that encourage students to grow and learn in the safest and most empowering spaces possible.
- Diverse and inclusive curricula, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching,² and materials that are free of bias:

² See “Foundations of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching.” Edutopia.
www.edutopia.org/article/foundations-culturally-and-linguistically-responsive-teaching/

- Empower students and families of all backgrounds to understand themselves more effectively in relation to others.
- Provide a means to explore ideas and concepts, make informed judgments and expand students' access to a variety of resources.
- Are shown to yield positive educational results, including achievement of higher test scores, decreased truancy rates, exhibited higher self-esteem, and increased graduation rates, creating greater post-secondary opportunities for all students.
- Are imperative in building socially competent and aware children and youth, enhancing their intellectual capability and psychosocial well-being.
- National PTA supports the implementation of diverse and inclusive curricula in K-12 public schools nationwide and is committed to the creation of innovative curricula and the necessary accompanying professional development that support culturally and linguistically-responsive teaching and learning.
- The history and experience of all students—including but not limited to African American, Latino(a), Native American, Asian LGBTQ+, and historically targeted and marginalized groups—should be accurately represented and taught.
- Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and inclusive curricula should:
 - Emphasize academic success for all students,
 - Enhance cultural competence by fostering understanding of students' cultures,
 - Promote family engagement by making connections between home language and school language, and
 - Develop critical consciousness by recognizing racism, classism, and other issues in the world and developing a student's awareness to openly address these situations.
- At the same time, school system policies should be established that ensure the rights of educators, parents, students and other community members to assume roles in the evaluation, selection and adoption or removal procedures for instructional materials and of school library materials in public schools. PTA supports:
 - Teachers in developing classroom libraries to include appropriate reading and educational materials;
 - The rights of parents to guide their children in choosing appropriate reading and educational materials; and

- The rights of both public libraries and school libraries to provide factually correct and historically accurate information and materials that are free of censorship based on bias, partisanship or doctrinal disapproval.

Related Resources

- [National PTA Position Statement on Inclusive Curricula in K-12 Education](#)
- [National PTA Position Statement on Libraries and Educational Material](#)
- [PTA Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion](#)
 - [PTA Local Leader Guidance for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [National PTA Guidance on Responding to Pushback Against Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Efforts](#)
 - [Respondiendo al Retroceso hacia los Esfuerzos de Diversidad, Equidad e Inclusión](#)
- [National PTA Resolution on Recognition of LGBTQ Individuals as a Protected Class](#)
 - [PTA Guidance on Recognition of LGBTQ Individuals as a Protected Class](#)
- [National PTA Position Statement Say Their Names: Addressing Institutional or Systemic Racism](#)
 - [Guidance and Talking Points for PTAs about Critical Race Theory](#)
- [National PTA Position Statement on The Education of Students with Disabilities](#)
- [National PTA Position Statement on Shared Responsibility in Educational Decision Making](#)
- [National PTA Resolution on Strengthening Support of Public School Teachers](#)
- [National PTA Position Statement on Safe and Supportive Schools](#)
- [National PTA Public Policy Platform 2021-2023: Safe, Supportive and Inclusive Schools](#)
- [National PTA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Resources Webpage](#)