PTA ADVOCACY
CHANGES LIVES
GUIDE TO IMPACTING PUBLIC POLICY
On February 17, 1897, over 2,000 people—mothers, fathers, teachers, laborers and legislators—attended the first convocation of the National Congress of Mothers in Washington, DC to advocate for the safety, education and well-being of children.
Dear Fellow PTA Advocate:

National PTA is the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association in the United States. Founded in 1897, our legacy of influencing federal policy to promote the education, health and well-being of every child spans over 120 years. Over the last century, PTA members have been instrumental in improving the lives of millions of children by advocating for the creation of universal kindergarten classes, child labor laws, a juvenile justice system and a healthy school meals program.

But what does it mean to be a part of PTA advocacy today?

In the 21st century, PTA advocacy means providing our children with nutritious meal options, keeping them safe from gun violence, protecting students’ personal and academic information and ensuring that kids are college and career-ready upon graduation from high school. Whether it is organizing a school meeting to discuss classes for students with special needs or calling a member of Congress to talk about the federal budget, PTA members are making a difference for children and families in their communities and across the country.

After 120 years, at its core, PTA advocacy is still about speaking for every child with one voice.

Sincerely,

Jim Accomando  
National PTA President

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NATIONAL PTA LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE:

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In celebration of National PTA’s 120th anniversary, this publication features the issues, stories and impact PTA advocates have had over our long history. As we look to the future, we honor the legacies of founders Phoebe Apperson Hearst, Alice McLellan Birney and Selena Sloan Butler by sharing the stories of present-day mothers, fathers and families who are changing the lives of children each and every day.

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The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—the previous education law before the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002. PTA lead the charge to include family engagement language in NCLB by initiating a bill called the "Parent Act." This bill included a definition of parental involvement and a majority of the bill ended up in the final NCLB law, including a requirement that states and school districts have family engagement policies and reserve funding for family engagement activities. The law also created a program called the Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs), which established parent centers in every state across the country to support children’s development and academic learning. Because of the advocacy efforts of PTA members in 2002 and 2015, the federal law governing K-12 education has continued to include strong family engagement policies and programs.
Why PTA Advocacy Matters
Mike Sullivan is from Lakewood, Co. and is the federal legislative chair for Colorado PTA. During National PTA’s 2015 Legislative Conference, Mike and several other members of the Colorado PTA met with Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) to ask him to enhance family engagement provisions in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—No Child Left Behind (ESEA-NCLB). Not only was Senator Bennet receptive to their ideas, he became a champion for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program. He and his staff worked with Colorado PTA and National PTA to draft an amendment that would garner enough support to be adopted into the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Through the collective efforts of Mike, Colorado PTA and PTA advocates nationwide who called, wrote, emailed and met with their members of Congress, ESSA was passed and signed into law with provisions that support strong family engagement policies and practices. Mike and his fellow PTA members proved that when 4 million PTA members nationwide make their voices heard by “Taking Action,” policymakers listen. It’s clear that PTA members have a significant impact on our nation’s children and education system.

PTA’s founding principle is its dedication to engaging parents in their children’s education and well-being. For 120 years, our members have provided training and resources on child and family development to millions of parents, families and community leaders and advocated for the inclusion of families in education policy at every level. In recent years, PTA developed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and assessment tools to measure the success of these standards in schools.

We Advocate to:
» Ensure school districts and schools invest more in family engagement activities to support students, families and schools
» Make sure family engagement strategies are included throughout all aspects of a child’s educational continuum, from early childhood programs through postsecondary exploration and career opportunities
» Support meaningful engagement of parents and families at the state, district and school level in the creation of education policies on an ongoing basis, especially those that directly impact students and families

The Challenge
Schools would need to increase education funding by over $1,000 in per pupil spending to gain the same results as effective family engagement.

ABOUT STATEWIDE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTERS
The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program, which will provide states and districts with the capacity to support effective family engagement policies and initiatives. SFECs will also provide training and guidance to help parents and families become equal partners with educators in improving their children’s academic achievement.
A LEGACY IN ADVOCACY

In 1922, PTA urged all state branches to "energetically proceed to secure the enforcement of child labor laws" based on the reality that one of every six school-aged children in the United States at the time was not enrolled in school, but instead regularly employed in some form of gainful occupation. PTA went on record that year to "actively support legislative, law-enforcement and child-welfare programs that would get children back into schools, protect their health and restore to them the heritage of their childhood." Although PTA was unable to secure adequate child labor laws through a constitutional amendment in the 1920s, PTA members changed tactics and worked tirelessly for the next 30 years at the state level to enact labor laws ranging from minimum employee age requirements to minimum wage provisions that are still in effect today.
The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law Dec. 10, 2015 to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—the primary law governing the federal role in K-12 public education. While this new law provides a great opportunity for states to tailor their education systems to the needs of their students—including students with special needs and English language learners—this new level of authority will also require an increased amount of responsibility for states to ensure they close achievement gaps and meet the needs of all students.

**We Advocate to:**

» Guarantee public funds are not diverted to any private school choice proposal and/or voucher system

» Make sure students and schools are evaluated on more than just test scores—any evaluation system must include factors such as teacher qualifications, class size, school safety, drop-out rates and how family engagement standards and policies are established and incorporated throughout the school

» Create a well-rounded education for all students including access to STEM education, arts education and comprehensive health and physical education

» Ensure students receive high-quality instruction from well-prepared teachers

**The Challenge**

Nearly one out of every five students in the U.S. does not graduate from high school. In 2015, only 38% of 12th-graders in the United States were considered to be at or above proficiency in reading and only 25% in math.

**Why PTA Advocacy Matters**

Lisa Holbrook started her child advocacy efforts 22 years ago when her two children began school in Clear Creek Independent School District in Houston, Texas. Now the president of Texas PTA, she has continued her passion for supporting quality public education for all children by advocating at the local, state and national levels. In 2014, Lisa and the Texas PTA worked to oppose a bill in the state legislature that would give tax credits to businesses that made donations to private or religious schools, which would potentially allow for $100 million to be diverted from public schools.

Lisa provided testimony to the Texas Senate Committee on Education in opposition to the bill on behalf of all PTA members across the state. She stated that Texas ranks in the bottom third of all states in per-pupil spending, and told members of the committee that they should not divert precious public money to serve a few select students. She further advocated that the state legislature should work to serve all children by using these funds to make the public schools stronger and safer. In addition to her testimony, Lisa and Texas PTA organized hundreds of PTA members to meet with their representatives to advocate in opposition to this issue. Because of Lisa and the Texas PTA’s advocacy efforts, the bill stalled in the Texas House of Representatives, successfully preventing $100 million from being diverted away from public schools.
A LEGACY IN ADVOCACY

In 1899, PTA was one of the first associations to urge lawmakers to create a separate juvenile court and probation system for children by passing a resolution to protect children from being incarcerated with adults. In 1903, National PTA established a Committee on Juvenile Courts and Probation, since renamed the Committee on Juvenile Protection, to work with policymakers to establish a juvenile court system that recognizes a child’s ability to change, and focuses on rehabilitation over punishment. During the 1960s, PTA worked with the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges (NCJ CJ) to make the court system more responsive to the needs of at-risk youth.11
Parents are acutely aware that sometimes their child may not make the best decisions, which is why second chances are important as children learn and grow into adulthood. However, for far too many youth, one mistake may drastically change their futures. This is why PTA has long advocated for family and community-based alternatives to children entering the juvenile justice system and has worked to protect those currently in the system so our youth can grow up and reach their full potential.

**We Advocate to:**

» Keep children that commit minor offenses—such as skipping school—out of juvenile detention facilities by offering community, school or family-focused interventions

» Encourage schools to use positive school discipline policies that are effective, fair and consistently implemented to keep students in school and learning instead of relying on exclusionary practices such as in and out-of-school suspensions

» Prohibit children from being incarcerated in adult jails, and protect those that are already in adult facilities by not allowing adult inmates to have sight or sound contact with juveniles

» Require states to establish solutions to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system

**The Challenge**

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that police make over 600,000 juvenile arrests each year and juvenile courts handle roughly 1.2 million cases. Those cases result in 55,000 children jailed for non-violent offenses, such as breaking curfew.\(^{10}\)

**Why PTA Advocacy Matters**

Ann Kirven is a PTA member from Kodiak, Alaska, an isolated island town with a population of just over 6,000 people. For the past 20 years, she has been raising her children in rural Alaska with limited family and community resources. When kids get in trouble for minor offenses in Kodiak, there are limitations to what local treatment providers can offer within the community. For more serious offenses, children may be sent to juvenile correction facilities miles away from their community, home and family. Often these facilities are difficult to access for families from remote communities like Kodiak where travel is restricted to boats or planes. This leaves counseling and support services between the offending youth and their family to take place either over the phone or by travelling long distances that can create a financial burden for some families.

Ann has witnessed some of her children's friends not graduate from high school and enter the adult justice system due to limited preventative behavior supports and resources. Ann has become an advocate for juvenile justice reform and is dedicated to improving community-based interventions for youth and families in rural Alaska. As Ann says, putting more intervention services in small communities is like “quick, effective medication for a deadly infection while it is in the early stages.” Ann continues to advocate to make the juvenile justice system the last option for at-risk youth, and not the first, as it is in many communities across the United States.
A LEGACY IN ADVOCACY

In 1974, National PTA adopted a resolution to protect the rights and meet the needs of students with disabilities when the U.S. Congress was considering the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA)—now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In 1979, PTA passed a resolution in support of closed captioned TV services and research that could enhance education opportunities for students with hearing impairments and learning disabilities. From 1989 to 1996, PTA updated and passed numerous position statements to improve and expand educational opportunities for students with special needs, which were reflected in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the reauthorization of IDEA."
Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—the main federal program authorizing state and local aid for special education services—the federal government requires states to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with special needs in the least restrictive environment. PTA has worked at all levels of government to protect the rights of children with special needs and their parents to ensure that all students have access to resources and the supports they need to become college and career ready.

**We Advocate to:**

- Incorporate PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships as a model for family engagement in special education programs
- Ensure students with special needs receive quality instruction and support from teachers, school counselors and other specialized school support personnel who have completed the state licensure or certification process
- Engage parents and families in the development of their child’s individualized education program (IEP) and 504 plan
- Require schools to implement positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) as an alternative to exclusionary school discipline practices such as in and out-of-school suspensions

**The Challenge**

Approximately 12% of public school students receive special education services each year. While the national high school graduation rate reached 83% in the 2014-2015 school year, students with special needs only graduated at an average rate of 64%. Additionally, students with special needs are more than twice as likely to receive disciplinary actions in school, such as out-of-school suspensions, than students without special needs.

**Why PTA Advocacy Matters**

Heidi Brewington is the Federal Legislative Chair (FLC) for California PTA and the proud mother of a son with a learning disability who is now attending college in Prescott, Ariz. Heidi’s advocacy efforts on behalf of families with students with special needs began almost two decades ago, when her son entered kindergarten and was not receiving the proper services that were listed in his Individualized Education Program (IEP). She directly advocated for improved services for her son by calling and writing letters to members of the school board, the district superintendent and others. After seeing how her advocacy benefited her child, Heidi wanted to help other parents learn how to become advocates for their children.

In 2015, she cofounded the Parents Education Network (PEN) of Los Angeles to help parents collaborate with educators, students and the community to help students with learning and attention differences succeed at school and outside the classroom. Heidi also hosts support groups for parents of children with special needs through PEN Los Angeles. By advocating for her child, Heidi has become an advocate for every child, and feels that the work she has accomplished through PTA helped give her son the foundation and support critical to his success not just in school, but in life.
A LEGACY IN ADVOCACY

As early as the 1920s, PTAs were responsible for expanding school lunch programs, particularly in rural communities. Children in rural communities did not have the luxury of going home during lunch to eat and rural schools rarely had space for a kitchen or dining area. PTAs would assist these schools in providing lunches for their students by donating funds and kitchen supplies. But these efforts could only go so far without legislation requiring schools to provide hot lunches during the school day. By the time President Harry S. Truman signed the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act into law, PTA advocates had been working to improve school nutrition for decades. The federal law passed in 1945 provides funding and resources to schools to ensure all students have access to hot school meals, effectively creating the modern school meal program we have today. Due to the early advocacy efforts of PTA members, now over 30 million students receive school lunches each day in the United States through the National School Lunch Program.
There is no greater shared responsibility than keeping youth safe and healthy. Whether it is providing students with healthy meals in schools or protecting all students from discrimination, bullying and harassment, PTA advocates continue to be committed to ensuring all children grow up in a safe and welcoming learning environment.

**We Advocate to:**

- Support and invest in federal programs that provide for every child's health and wellness—including comprehensive mental, social and emotional health
- Improve access to, and provide funding for, qualified school-based health and wellness practitioners such as nurses, school psychologists, counselors and social workers
- Strengthen and improve school nutrition standards, guidelines and programs as well as provide resources to update the equipment needed to serve healthy school meals
- Promote school policies that address, prevent and eliminate all types of bullying behavior directed at any student both inside and outside of school

**The Challenge**
The number of outside factors which negatively affect a child’s ability to reach their full potential in school is increasing. Forty-four percent of children attending school are living in limited income households and 12.7 million children are identified as overweight. These statistics are compounded by a growing number of students feeling unsafe in and out of school, as 28% of U.S. students in grades six to 12 experience some form of bullying.

**Why PTA Advocacy Matters**
JoAnne Hammermaster from Marietta, Ga. is the Health & Wellness Chair of Georgia PTA and the co-founder and chairman of Real Food for Kids. JoAnne began her healthy eating advocacy efforts after she saw that a cheese quesadilla on her child’s lunch menu had 76 different ingredients. She pulled together a concerned group of parents at the school to improve the school’s food options and nutrition policy. However, her group soon realized that it was difficult to make changes at the school-level since the school district was responsible for the nutrition policy.

Together, they decided to take their cause to the county and created the Real Food for Kids organization, which educates school communities about the benefits of eating healthy foods and advocates to ensure children have access to nutritious foods. Working as a team, they successfully advocated for the school district to remove over 80% of the harmful ingredients in their lunch menu items. As she puts it, “we want children to have the best opportunity to be academically and emotionally successful, and a healthy diet is a big piece of the puzzle.” Through her and other parents’ advocacy efforts, students are receiving healthier school meals. JoAnne is continuing PTA’s longstanding history of advocating to improve students’ well-being and learning environment.
A LEGACY IN ADVOCACY

During national economic hardships, such as the Great Depression and sequestration, PTA has successfully advocated to maintain strong federal investments in education programs so that every child can receive a quality education. In 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act (BCA) to reduce the federal deficit by setting a maximum cap that the federal government can spend each year on programs. Due to the BCA, most federal programs—including education programs—received automatic funding cuts in 2013, called sequestration. In response, PTA successfully advocated with other education groups to prevent nearly $10 billion in education budget cuts at the federal level and raise the federal spending caps to allow for more federal investments in important education programs such as Title I and IDEA. We continue to advocate for strong investments in education at the local, state and federal levels today.
Earning a high school diploma and obtaining post-secondary degrees or certificates are strongly aligned to individual success and our nation’s economic growth. Across the country there are great disparities between available resources as well as the quality of and access to educational opportunities, which can limit students from achieving their full academic potential. The differences in education attainment and opportunities negatively affect our children’s futures, so PTA advocates for strong investments in quality education and family engagement programs that prepare students for the 21st century workforce.

**Why PTA Advocacy Matters**

As a substitute teacher in Fairfax County Public Schools, the District Director of the Northern Virginia District (NOVA) PTA and immediate past president of the Fairfax County Council PTA, Debbie Kilpatrick knows firsthand the importance of providing every child with a high-quality education that prepares them for college and career. For years, Fairfax County schools were financed almost solely from revenue received through county property tax, with no opportunities to increase funding for education in alternative ways. As state and federal funding for education continued to decrease over the years, the Fairfax County Council PTA worked to pass a referendum through the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to include a 4% meals tax on the Nov. 8, 2016 ballot.

The Fairfax County Council PTA helped to create the Invest in Fairfax Coalition, consisting of several PTA and community advocates to build support and inform the public about the need to increase funding for education and county services. The Coalition formed the volunteer-led Vote Yes Meals Tax grassroots campaign resulting in local PTAs, school board members, legislators and community members participating in door-to-door canvassing, Get Out the Vote drives, informational forums and a social media and communications campaign to pass the meal tax. Although the measure did not pass, the Council’s advocacy has highlighted the importance of funding for education and they will continue to advocate for increased resources for students in their community.

**The Challenge**

The federal government has underfunded low-income schools by over $20 billion over the last decade. In 2014, at least 31 states provided less state funding per student than before the great recession in 2008.
Phoebe Apperson Hearst, a co-founder of National PTA, was a strong supporter of early childhood education and helped establish seven kindergartens in San Francisco, South Dakota and Washington, DC. At the first National Congress of Mothers Convocation Feb. 17, 1897, public kindergarten classes and the establishment of daycare centers for working mothers were two of the primary topics discussed at the meeting. Throughout the early 1900s, access to early childhood education and kindergarten programs was a major focus of PTA members’ advocacy efforts. Over time, each state began to establish opportunities for children to participate in kindergarten programs. Due to Hearst’s passion for early childhood education and the work of thousands of PTA members for over a century, now nearly 3.8 million students enroll in kindergarten each year.
Parents are their child’s first teachers. This is why it is important to empower all families with the best tools and practices to effectively engage in their child’s education and development at the earliest ages—both at home and at school. Early learning is associated with positive outcomes such as increased graduation rates, higher education attainment and lower incarceration rates. For over a century, PTA members have recognized the need to educate our nation’s earliest learners and continue to advocate to improve affordability, accessibility, coordination and family engagement in high-quality early education programs.

**We Advocate to:**

- Provide federal assistance for families with inadequate income to make early education programs affordable, available and accessible to all families
- Require family engagement policies in the development, implementation and evaluation of all early childhood programs, including home visiting programs
- Establish professional standards and provide ongoing training and professional development for early learning and childcare providers
- Enhance coordination between early childhood education programs and elementary schools to improve the transition for children entering kindergarten

**The Challenge**

In 2014, the United States only enrolled 42% of three-year-olds and 68% of four-year-olds in pre-primary education programs, compared to France which enrolled over 95% of three and four-year-olds.

**Why PTA Advocacy Matters**

Chris Gearlds, the principal at Warren Early Childhood Center (ECC), father of two and PTA member in Indianapolis, Ind., understands the anxiety that parents have about leaving their child with another adult. He knows he cannot succeed in educating the nearly 300 students at his school, 75% of whom qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch, without the support and engagement of their parents and the PTA. Therefore, every year the center holds a parent orientation at the beginning of the school year, during which Chris asks parents for ideas on how best create the most conducive learning environment for the students.

In 2013, those parents asked the ECC to offer training and instructions to improve the health and nutrition of their children at home. So Chris partnered with the school’s PTA to hold education nights for parents on how to cook healthy meals and to practice other healthy habits for children at all ages at home. As Chris says, the success of students at Warren ECC depends on how well families and the school can work together hand-in-hand and build trust between new parents and school administrators. Chris and the Warren ECC PTA continue to work together to provide important trainings and services for their community’s earliest learners and their parents to ensure a successful learning experience.
A LEGACY IN ADVOCACY

Following the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Ct., Connecticut PTA, with the support of National PTA, offered individuals a unique opportunity to let the students of Sandy Hook know that an entire nation supports them by inviting people to send snowflakes of all shapes and sizes. PTA volunteers used those snowflakes to welcome students to a winter wonderland at the new Sandy Hook school building. In response to the tragedy, PTA members nationwide led advocacy efforts to try to pass the Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act of 2013 in Congress, which would have expanded background checks to most gun sales and transfers. However, the bill ultimately stalled in the Senate. PTA members continue to advocate for common sense gun safety policies to ensure our schools and communities are safe.
No parent should fear for the safety of their child every time they leave home. But all too often, children are put in harm’s way due to gun and other forms of violence in their community. Parents, teachers, school administrators and other education advocates must work together to prevent violence in schools and the community through the creation of connected communities and positive school climates that keep students safe, healthy and in school. Family engagement plays a key role in gun safety and violence prevention, which is why PTAs nationwide are engaged in the development and implementation of school safety policies and emergency response plans to maintain a safe learning environment for all students.

**We Advocate to:**

- Provide incentives for school districts to ensure there are necessary and qualified personnel to respond to the mental, physical, behavioral, developmental and academic needs of all students
- Support state and federal funding for research on the causes and effects of gun violence on youth and communities
- Promote education initiatives that raise public awareness of firearm safety and gun violence prevention strategies
- Require a waiting period and comprehensive background check prior to buying a firearm
- Ban access to military-style semi-automatic assault weapons

**The Challenge**

Since 2013, there have been at least 203 instances of a firearm discharged inside a school building or on a school campus in America—averaging nearly once a week. An estimated 46 million American children will be affected by violence, crime, abuse or psychological trauma each year.

**Why PTA Advocacy Matters**

Like many parents, Susan Keightley’s views of her children’s safety were completely changed by the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in 2012. Susan is a PTA parent and former public school teacher from Alexandria, Va., and she couldn’t help but envision her loved ones in the tragedy. After that horrifying day, she vowed to advocate for improving policies that reduce gun violence in schools and communities. Susan found an opportunity to advocate for change by joining the Virginia chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. This grassroots network of moms has chapters in all 50 states and has successfully advocated for better gun safety policies at the local, state and national level.

In 2015, Susan joined other members of the Virginia chapter and gun violence survivors for a lobby day in Richmond to ask lawmakers to put the safety of families and communities ahead of gun lobby interests. Together, their advocacy efforts successfully stalled a bill in the Virginia State Senate that would have allowed concealed handgun permit holders to carry guns into schools outside of normal school hours. She is also dedicated to helping parents prevent gun violence through the Be SMART campaign, a public education campaign encouraging responsible firearm storage to reduce the unintentional child shootings, suicides and homicides that occur when children and teens get ahold of a gun. With every Be SMART presentation Susan hosts, she says she feels as if she has started a dialogue that will have a positive impact on school districts and communities. “Together,” she says, “we can work to ensure our children’s schools remain safe environments dedicated to growth and learning.”
A LEGACY IN ADVOCACY
As early as 1910, National PTA was at the forefront of protecting children from negative media and advertising. In 1934, PTA members successfully advocated for the Federal Communications Commission Act (FCCA) which led to the federal government being able to better protect consumers, especially children, from advertisements. Over the years, PTA supported the monitoring of radio and internet advertising that targeted children and the improved quality of children’s programming. In 1990, PTA successfully advocated for the Children’s Television Act, which limited the number of commercials per hour during children’s programs. As technology has advanced, so has PTA’s advocacy efforts to protect children from any negative influences, ensuring their privacy and personal information is secure.\textsuperscript{xxvi}
Advances in technology and increased access to the internet have allowed more opportunities for personalized learning and for families to be regularly engaged in meaningful communication with teachers and school personnel about their child’s learning. PTA encourages innovative learning environments nationwide that allow students and educators to utilize technology to effectively assess learning, guide instruction and support educational outcomes. However, it is also important for school and local district policies to be updated to protect the privacy of student data and ensure families and students have reasonable control over the collection, storage and use of electronic student data.

**We Advocate to:**

- Ensure families are informed about the use of technology in schools and know their rights under the law to protect their child’s personal and educational information
- Modernize laws to better protect students’ educational records and the collection of information gathered online
- Promote policies that increase access to digital devices and broadband to facilitate personalized learning
- Provide teachers and school officials with the training they need on how to use student data for educational purposes while ensuring that student data is protected

**The Challenge**

About 95% of school districts nationwide rely on cloud services—services offered through the internet that can be assessed from any location—to manage school data. However, 75% of districts do not inform parents of the use of cloud services and less than 7% of school contracts explicitly restrict the sale and marketing of student information through cloud services.

**Why PTA Advocacy Matters**

Tammy Luty is a Michigan PTA member and has two children currently attending Farmington Public Schools in a suburb outside of Detroit, Mich. Tammy is passionate about ensuring students’ school information and privacy are protected. When Tammy was Michigan PTA’s Federal Legislative Chair (FLC), she spoke in front of the Michigan state legislature’s House Education Committee to advocate for better protection of students’ data privacy and encouraged passage of a bill that would better protect student data.

In her testimony, Tammy explained that technology use at her children’s schools has greatly increased but the policies and procedures that ensure student data is secure have not been updated at the same pace. The bill she advocated for would have banned the state from selling any information that is part of a student’s education records. She told her elected officials that she “hopes that someone will protect her child’s data.” Tammy continues this advocacy work today at both the state and federal level to ensure that laws are updated to protect the rights of students and their school records.
In 1981, National PTA passed a resolution to support nationally agreed-upon voluntary academic standards that are the result of consensus at the state and local levels with the involvement of parents. By the early 2000s, all states had state-determined learning standards for students and state definitions of proficiency for each grade level. However, state standards and proficiency levels varied among the states, which resulted in a patchwork system of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level that often-left students unprepared for postsecondary opportunities. In 2010, 48 states came together to draft the Common Core State Standards—grade by grade expectations for students in Mathematics and English Language Arts. National PTA, state PTAs and parents provided input on the standards, and the association has advocated to maintain and continue to improve state-adopted college and career ready standards.
Most jobs today require additional education and/or training after high school such as career and technical certification, a degree of completion from an institution of higher education or an apprenticeship. However, many students and their families face challenges accessing these types of postsecondary opportunities because of a lack of rigorous coursework, financial circumstances or limited knowledge of the options available to them. Therefore, PTA supports high academic standards, appropriately aligned assessments and counseling and guidance support in schools to ensure all students are ready for college, career and/or military service that enables them to compete in the global economy.

**We Advocate to:**

- Maintain, strengthen and successfully implement college and career ready standards with aligned curriculum and assessments for all students, from early learning through high school
- Encourage continued resources and programs that increase the high school graduation rate and the number of students seeking postsecondary opportunities
- Promote opportunities for students and families to explore various postsecondary and career opportunities through dual and concurrent enrollment, advanced coursework and career and technical education
- Support policies to improve college affordability, simplify the application process for all forms of financial aid and expand access to in-state tuition

**The Challenge**

By 2020, 65% of all jobs will require some form of postsecondary education and/or training. In 2015, only 46% of individuals aged 25-29 held an associate’s degree or higher.xxxviii

**How PTA Advocacy Matters**

Natalia Suarez is a PTA member from North Bergen, N.J. She first became a PTA member 18 years ago when her oldest daughter entered kindergarten. Today, she is a proud mother of two daughters who are attending college. However, her family’s journey through the education system hasn’t always been the smoothest.

While her daughters were in high school, Natalia felt frustrated that the school did not have information for all parents on SAT prep, scholarship applications and financial aid options. Parents were unaware of the postsecondary options available to their children, especially if they didn’t speak English or had not attended college themselves. Because of her family’s experience, Natalia now helps translate resources into Spanish and holds workshops to inform other parents on what the New Jersey state standards and assessments mean for their child. Even though her own children have graduated from high school, Natalia is committed to helping every parent learn about the tools and resources available to them to help their child access the postsecondary options right for them.
Appendix


For more info on National PTA’s advocacy efforts or the Government Affairs Department, please contact GovtAffairs@PTA.org