

A Guide to Hosting an ESSA Education Event

PTA and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)



1. Why Should You Host an ESSA Education Event for Parents?

Parents in your community likely have questions about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the law governing K-12 education. For the first time, ESSA acknowledges the critical role parents and other community members play in student success and school improvement efforts by requiring that they are involved in the implementation process. As a PTA leader, you can help educate and empower parents and families to be informed and get involved in the implementation of the new law.

ESSA provides a unique opportunity for parents and families to give their input and hold states and districts accountable for their child's educational experience. To help bring all voices to the table, PTAs should host ESSA education events so all parents feel empowered to speak up for every child under the new law.

2. What Does the ESSA Education Event and Presentation Cover?

Parents, guardians and family members participating in this workshop will:

- Gain a better understanding of the history of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- Know the differences between the No Child Left Behind Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- Understand how this new law impacts their child and community
- Find tools and resources to get involved in the implementation of ESSA

National PTA has developed all the tools you need to plan, promote and host this event, including a workshop presentation and speaker script. You can access these resources at [PTA.org/ESSAState](https://pta.org/ESSAState).

3. Who Should Be Involved in the ESSA Education Event and Presentation?

If you have been following the [PTA ESSA State Roadmap](#), you should be well-versed in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and know of several other parent leaders who are involved in ESSA implementation.

Identify at least one or two PTA volunteers who can give the ESSA Education Event presentation. If you are hosting the event at a school-based PTA meeting or event, make sure to invite the school's leadership—the principal or assistant principal. Share the customizable workshop PowerPoint presentation and script with your school administration.

Here are some tips for getting others involved in the event:

- Ask PTA board members, teachers, other parents and community leaders to help promote the event to families.
- Work with your PTA Legislative or Advocacy Chair to help plan the event, prepare parent handouts and work with the school media specialist (or a tech savvy PTA volunteer) to help set up Audio/Visuals.
- Enlist your PTA Membership Chair to work the sign-in table. This educational event shows families how PTA supports their children and the school and is a great opportunity to recruit new PTA members.

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- Ask past event volunteers to help serve or sell refreshments, pass handouts, collect evaluation forms or stay a few minutes after to help clean up.
- Request older students at your school or a secondary school nearby to assist PTA leaders or other adults in playing games with school-aged children in a nearby room so that more parents can attend the workshop. This would be a great way to earn an hour of community service credit for a high school student.
- Seek support from your school or school district for translation services.
- Ask a local restaurant or grocery store to donate or discount refreshments.

4. When and Where Should the ESSA Education Event Be Held?

When?

Think about a time that will allow the greatest number of families in your community to participate. Consider before or after school, on a weekday evening or the weekend. Also, consider upcoming state-level and/or education and community based conferences, meetings or events where you may be able to be included on the agenda.

If you are hosting the event at a school, be sure to consult your school administrators to avoid conflicts with other events (academic or extracurricular) that might be taking place that week.

Where?

In our effort to bring strong family-school-community partnerships, your PTA should seek to bring students, families, teachers and others in the community together on the school campus or another family-friendly location, such a local community center or public library.

As you choose the location for your ESSA Education Event, make sure the space has:

- Adequate room for audience set-up (i.e., number of chairs and/or tables, special accommodations for persons with disabilities).
- Audio/visuals for showing the PowerPoint on a large screen.
- Adequate space for a welcome table and refreshments.
- Nearby room for childcare.
- Accommodations for children and/or adults with special needs.
- If possible, ask a local business to provide promotional notepads and pens/pencils so that parents can take notes.

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5. How Do You Get Families to Attend?

Once you have planned the logistics and your presenters are confirmed, it's important to make sure parents and families will actually attend. Here's what you should include in your communications.

Key Messages

Below are some important messages to emphasize as you spread the word about this event:

- Learn more about the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), how it will impact your child and how you can get involved to make a difference in their education.
- Understand how you can engage in the development of new education plans and policies under ESSA to support all children.
- Discover the role of parents in ESSA implementation and how parents can make sure that every child gets a high-quality education
- Visit [PTA.org/ESSA](https://pta.org/ESSA) to learn more!

Event Promotion Suggestions

Use the following suggestions to promote your workshop, as well as the [PTA and ESSA Media Toolkit](#)

- Post an announcement on the school and/or PTA website.
- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter) to provide updates about the event.
- Send an invitation letter or flier home to parents in student backpacks or greet them with a letter or flier in the drop-off/pick-up line.
- Ask volunteers to make personal phone calls to parents—encouraging them to participate. Consider establishing a “phone tree” among PTA members.
- Submit a short article for school for print and electronic newsletters.
- Ask to provide an event notice in school announcements.
- Hang posters and fliers in visible locations.
- Post event dates and reminders on outdoor signs near student drop-off and pickup locations.
- Promote the event at nearby aftercare or community centers.

If You Are Hosting the Event at a Community-Based Location:

- Utilize established community communication channels such as a newsletter, email distribution list or website.
- Reach out to local media outlets to publicize the event—submit an article for the community paper and/or contact the public-access television cable TV channel.
- Hang posters and fliers in visible locations at the event location.
- Ask for announcements to be made during other events at this location.

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6. Event Planning Checklist

Get Started!

- ✓ Explore the ESSA resources available on [PTA.org/ESSA](https://www.pta.org/ESSA).
- ✓ Identify presenters and potential event dates, times and location.
- ✓ Secure event location and coordinate logistics at the event site.
- ✓ Begin planning the promotion and communications tools you will use.

2– 3 Weeks Prior to Event

- ✓ Customize the presentation, review the script and resources on [PTA.org/ESSA](https://www.pta.org/ESSA).
- ✓ Promote the event to families using [PTA and ESSA Media Toolkit](#) and an array of PTA and school and community communications vehicles available to you (i.e., e-newsletters, voicemail blasts, text message systems, social media, signage on school grounds, morning announcements).
- ✓ Contact community members for in-kind donations, if needed (e.g., refreshments, transportation vouchers, photocopying, translation services).
- ✓ Prepare and print handouts for families, including membership forms and event surveys.
- ✓ Solicit volunteers needed for event day.
- ✓ Secure the Audio/Visual equipment you will need.

Event Day

- ✓ Set-up audience chairs/tables, check-in table, refreshment table, and prepare childcare room.
- ✓ Assemble handouts.
- ✓ Prepare speaker station, including water and copies of handouts.
- ✓ Communicate to volunteers their roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Greet families when they enter and encourage PTA membership.
- ✓ Host and facilitate event.
- ✓ Distribute [printed ESSA Education Event Feedback forms](#). Collect printed forms, if used.
- ✓ Clean up.

Post-Event

- ✓ Post event photos on social media and prepare a short summary of the event for PTA and other community based e-newsletters or publications
- ✓ Follow up with attendees to encourage them to complete event survey and join PTA
- ✓ Send thank you notes to:
 - Leadership and/or staff at event location who helped organize event
 - Volunteers who supported the event
 - Businesses or local restaurants who provided any in-kind donations
- ✓ Complete the ESSA education event online report form at [PTA.org/TakesAction](https://www.pta.org/TakesAction).