

# A GUIDE TO PTA COUNCILS

## **What is a PTA Council?**

A 'council' is a group of local PTA units (no less than three) organized under the authority of the State PTA for the purpose of promoting conferences, communications, leadership development, and coordination of efforts of such local PTA units.....Each State PTA may create or establish councils in counties, cities, and other areas designated by its board of managers/directors.

*National PTA Bylaws*

## **Purposes of Councils**

Councils play an important role in the PTA. They provide support and assistance to the PTA units within their areas and are a valuable resource of guidance and information. Councils provide the following services:

- ❖ Interpret, promote and support the basic policies of the PTA
- ❖ Coordinate the efforts of local units within their areas
- ❖ Make people aware of the need for action through the united strength of local PTAs
- ❖ Promote the use of State and National PTA publications, programs, and projects
- ❖ Provide in-depth background information on current issues related to the lives and education of children and youth
- ❖ Assist local units, when asked, in understanding and carrying out action requested by resolutions adopted at State and National PTA conventions
- ❖ Build local unit and public support for local, State, and National PTA legislative action
- ❖ Provide opportunities for PTAs to address issues, which include but reach beyond the local school community
- ❖ Strengthen PTA leadership by providing leadership development
- ❖ Coordinate/cooperate in community projects
- ❖ Enhance communication among local units, the council, and the state
- ❖ Represent the interests of their member local units and the State and National PTA before school districts within their geographic areas and other appropriate provider organizations or advocacy groups
- ❖ Provide a forum for public information and debate on issues affecting children and youth, for candidates for public office and for legislative/public policy matters

## **Council Meetings**

Every council decides the *number* of meetings to be held during the year and specifies this in its bylaws. Meetings should be held often enough to accomplish council work but not interfere with local unit meetings or overburden council and unit leaders.

### **Council meetings should do the following:**

- Meet the needs of the individual units and the council as a whole
- Increase the effectiveness of the member units
- Provide support
- Encourage the sharing of ideas
- Strengthen the relationship between the local PTA unit, council, district, region, State PTA and National PTA
- Provide opportunities for local leaders to work together and network with each other



### **Topics that may be covered in regular council meetings include the following:**

- Leadership development programs
- Explanation and discussion of materials sent by the State and National PTA
- Committee reports
- Specific projects
- Membership promotion and enrollment plans
- Founders Day activities
- School board reports

## **Leadership Development**

A primary task of a council is to develop and strengthen PTA leadership. Council meetings and activities provide excellent opportunities for leadership development by modeling good leadership skills, such as the president following proper procedures, committees making reports, studies being initiated and carried out, speakers being introduced, and potential problem situations being handled. Leadership development programs conducted by councils enhance PTA activities by providing well-informed, dedicated and confident leaders.

### **Leadership development programs should include the following components:**

- Organizational – PTA history, purposes, and basic policies
- Individual – personal leadership skills
- Positional – specific job responsibilities

## **Council Leadership**

A person must be a member of a local PTA/PTSA unit in order to serve as an officer or committee chair of the council. It is a good idea to draw council leaders from among PTA presidents, officers and chairpersons who have worked effectively in their local units and whose terms of office have expired. As in the local units, it is important for council boards to cultivate leaders from the local units who might step up to council leadership. When identifying potential council leaders, keep in mind that it is important for these individuals to have the ability to look at the “big picture” and to understand the structure of PTA.

## **Council Budget**

A council sets an example for its member units by operating on a planned annual budget to finance its work. The following items should be included in a council budget:

- ❑ Operating Expenses
- ❑ Expenses of Officers and Chairpersons
- ❑ Leadership Development Expenses
- ❑ Purchase of publications, leadership development programs, and materials for council leaders
- ❑ Funds for attendance of delegates at district, regional, and state meetings and conferences
- ❑ Funds for attendance of delegates at State and National PTA conventions



## **Programs and Projects**

It is a council's responsibility to make the State and National PTA programs and materials known, available, and useful to local communities. Council projects are undertaken only after a majority of the PTA units in the council vote to support them. Councils are guided by the same objects, basic policies and principles that direct all PTA work. Council leaders should select programs and projects that will have educational, social or recreational value.

### **Council programs should do the following:**

- Work toward council goals
- Be planned in advance yet be flexible enough to address current and emerging issues
- Be a cooperative venture where, for example, a number of units might share in the expense of bringing in a special council program or speaker.



## **Communications**

Information and news can be communicated through a council newsletter, electronic forum, email list serves, council website, school system courier mailings and USPS mail. Council officers and committee chairs can share information about school and community issues and activities as well as current legislative activity effecting education, children and youth, and PTA news. Each member unit could submit an article or information to share with others. Highlighting best practices in your communications

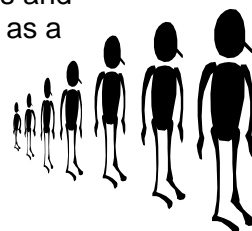
with local units allows local units to learn from each other. The communication vehicles utilized by councils also provides an opportunity for administrators to provide information and announcements about what's going on in the school district.

**It is important to keep the lines of communication open.** Distribute information in a timely manner so that local PTAs can share the information at their meetings and in their newsletters or electronic list serves. Be sure to include key individuals from the school community.

Explore different ways to extend PTA services through improved communication with PTA members and the general public. Finally, keep in mind that the council is an important communication link between the local unit, State and National PTA.

## **Working Relationships**

A council has a responsibility to unite the home, school and community on behalf of children and youth. It is important, therefore, for a council to cooperate with other community organizations and agencies having similar goals. A council can develop good public relations and serve as a channel of communications between the school and the community.



**Here are some ways that councils can cooperate with other groups:**

- Stay informed on current local issues and programs
- Provide parent education forums or summits
- Provide parent representation on school district task forces, committees and other entities
- Form networks and coalitions
- Share materials
- Inform the public of needs, concerns or issues of interest
- Coordinate community services

## **Resources for Councils**

- Council Bylaws
- Council Standing Rules
- State PTA suggested council bylaws
- State PTA suggested guidelines for councils
- State PTA publications and website
- Procedure Book from past officer or chairperson
- *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, current edition
- The National PTA Handbook, materials, and website
- State PTA leadership handbook and materials
- NC PTA "Dollars and Sense" guide for treasurers
- National PTA "Money Matters" booklet and supplemental materials
- National PTA catalog



# The Duties of the Council Delegate

Council Delegates are the vital link between the local PTA unit and the council. Delegates should perform the following activities:

- Attend every meeting of their local PTA unit and the council or send their elected alternate
- Be familiar with bylaws, standing rules, policies and procedures at all levels
- Report to the council their PTA unit's decision on matters referred to it for approval or information
- Take careful notes, bringing back a full report to their PTA unit and filing reports with the secretary of the unit
- Put announcements of council activities in the PTA unit newsletter
- Share information on unit activities, programs, and publications with other member units
- Encourage unit members to attend council programs and support council projects
- Notify unit members of the next council meeting and urge them to attend
- Prepare a procedure book or year-end report of activities for the guidance of future delegates
- The local unit delegate to the Council should fill out a "Delegate Report Form" documenting what is reported at the general meeting of his/her PTA. After the report is made, file the completed form with the Recording Secretary. The Delegate Report Form should include: **Meeting attended, date of meeting, place of meeting; any issues voted on, what they were and result of the vote of each; any matters referred to local units; announcements; future meetings; and all the main points presented.**