

Duties of the PTA School Board Liaison

The PTA school board liaison bridges the two groups by:

- Introducing him or herself to school board members at the first board meeting and explaining his or her role as PTA liaison.
- Attending school board meetings regularly, then reporting to the PTA.
- In advance of meetings, studying agendas and reports. Knowing what to do in order to speak.
- Encouraging parents to attend school board meetings.
- Knowing PTA policies, structure and position statements.
- If acting as PTA spokesperson, following correct procedures (PTA and school board) to state PTA positions on issues.
- Attending PTA council, district and regional workshops for school board liaisons. If none are available, then requesting them.
- Alerting the PTA unit, council or district to issues that may require PTA study and action.
- Letting the school board know that the PTA wants to serve on advisory committees. Following up to make sure the PTA is represented.
- Sharing *Our Children*, the Virginia PTA *Bulletin* and other appropriate PTA publications with every school board member.

School Board Elections and the PTA

School board members are either elected or appointed to serve a specified number of years. It is important for PTAs to be involved in either process. Find out when regular or special school board elections will be held. Review election laws and rules that apply to non-profit associations. PTAs may:

- Alert community members to the coming election (or appointment) of school board members. Encourage them to be informed and to vote.
- Publicize the duties of a school board member and the qualifications of the candidates.
- Sponsor community meetings where ALL school board candidates are invited to speak. This may be done in cooperation with other non-partisan organizations.

Remember: PTAs do not support or oppose individual candidates for public office. PTAs support issues and principles.

Leadership on local boards of education is of vital interest to all citizens. PTA members, including local, state and national PTA officers, may serve on school boards as long as they do not seek PTA endorsement or use their PTA office to promote their candidacy.

Evaluating School Board Candidates

All citizens should carefully evaluate each candidate for the school board. They might consider whether the candidate is:

- A firm supporter of public education.
- Familiar with the schools in the district and with basic issues in education today.
- Informed about board functions, policies and responsibilities.
- Someone with leadership qualities.
- Willing and able to spend the time necessary to serve effectively.
- A hard worker and a clear and independent thinker who works well with others.
- Aware of goals and concerns of parents, students, business and other community groups.
- A skilled communicator with a good sense of humor.
- Able to represent the whole community on all education issues.

A Final Word

As an organization devoted to the well being of all children and youth, the PTA provides parents, teachers and students the means to participate and work effectively with the school board. At the same time, the PTA helps the school board to be informed about the community and the needs of children. This partnership improves the quality of education in communities throughout America.

The information in this document came from a brochure published by National PTA.



Partners in Education:

The School Board and the PTA



**Virginia
PTA**
everychild.one voice.®

Virginia PTA
1027 Wilmer Avenue
Richmond, VA 23227-2419
Phone: 804-264-1234
Toll Free Phone: 1-866-4VAKIDS (82-5437)
Fax: 804-264-4014
E-mail: info@vapta.org
Website: www.vapta.org

Official Training Document of Virginia PTA

July 2005

The School Board and the PTA

Partnership, teamwork and cooperation. These are the building blocks of education leadership today. Nowhere is partnership more urgently needed than between school boards and parents.

School boards are responsible for taking the lead in identifying the community's education needs and meeting those needs through local school policy. When parents and teachers join together in PTA, they can become better informed, better organized, and more effective partners in working with school boards to achieve quality public education.

The School Board's Role in Education

The school board is legally responsible for policies that govern the operation of the school district. The school board's main functions generally are:

- Policy-making in all areas of school programs and functions.
- Choosing and evaluating the superintendent, and approving selection procedures for other personnel.
- Overseeing the educational programs and business operations of the district. *The school board has the ultimate responsibility for the activities and services of the schools, according to the laws of various states.*
- Exercising fiscal authority (the right to tax and the right to adopt the budget) in some states. In others, school boards send their adopted budgets to their local governing bodies who have final authority (Virginia).
- Long-range planning and goal setting for educational programs of the district.
- Approving curriculum in accordance with state law and state department of education regulations and local goals.
- Representing the public as the employer of school personnel in any collective bargaining process.

School Board Structure and Meetings

School boards vary greatly in size and kind. Some families are even in one school district for elementary school and another for high school. It is important to know the following:

- The geographic area and name of your school district(s).
- The organizational structure of the school board(s) and the responsibilities of each part of that structure.
- How to get an item on the school board's agenda for discussion.

- How to address the school board and voice your PTA's position on issues.
- Which decisions the school board has the authority to make, and which are made by a school-based management council or other school and parent committee.

Questions to Ask about Your School Board

These questions will help you learn more about your school board.

1. How many members does your school board have? What are their names and how may they be contacted?
2. How are your school board members selected (elected or appointed)?
3. What are the legal responsibilities of school board members?
4. How long is their term of office?
5. How often and where do they meet?
6. Are school board meetings open to the public? Are they aired on a cable station?
7. Does the board have the authority to levy school taxes? (In Virginia, school boards do not have taxing authority.)
8. Does it reserve time on its agenda for public hearings?
9. Does it have written policies on such matters as involvement of the PTA and use of volunteers?
10. Does the school board policy agree with PTA policy on parent involvement?
11. What is the relationship of school-based management council(s) or other school and parent committees to the school board?

For answers, call or see your school board chairman or school district.

How the PTA Cooperates with the School Board

School boards do a better job when they are challenged and supported by an informed and involved community. PTA bylaws encourage participation in the decision-making process to develop school policy.

In learning to work with your local school board, understand the difference between administration (superintendent and staff) and policy-making (school board).

The PTA can be a valuable partner to the school board in the following areas:

Communication

- Establish regular two-way communication with the school board.
- Appoint a PTA liaison to attend school board meetings and collect copies of agendas and reports.
- Keep the PTA membership informed of school board actions and policies through reports in newsletters, meetings and special programs.
- Decide who speaks for the PTA to your school board. To avoid confusion, it is important that the PTA spokesperson voice the consensus of the PTA, not personal views or opinions.
- Present PTA positions on issues.
- When appropriate (and following official procedures), report PTA concerns, parents' reactions to school policies and community problems to school officials (principal, superintendent or school board).

Participation

- Encourage the school board to develop and implement a formal, written parent involvement policy.
- Make sure PTA representatives sit on special school board advisory committees and task forces.
- Ask a school board member to help plan and/or attend PTA conferences, workshops and open forums.
- Invite school board members to participate on PTA committees and attend PTA programs.
- Encourage parents to attend school board meetings. Let them know the scheduled date, time, place and agenda items.
- Call public attention to important school issues being decided by the school board.

How the School Board Can Cooperate with the PTA

The school board can work with the PTA by:

- Appointing a PTA member to advisory committees.
- Sending notices of all school board meetings to local PTA units.
- Attending PTA council, district and/or local meetings whenever possible.
- Asking for PTA input on issues of importance to the local school district (e.g., decisions on school boundaries, budgetary matters, etc.).