

# Getting to Know Your Multicultural Community

## Getting to know your multicultural community and getting everyone involved in your PTA.

It is very important to know and understand the culture of the community you are serving, such as race, religion and country of origin. Ask the questions: What holidays are observed? What are the unique cultural traditions, celebrations? What concerns do families have? What do parents need?

### We need to ask our parents these questions:

- How can the PTA assist you? What needs do you have?
- Do you understand what the PTA is asking of you?
- Do you understand how important your involvement can be?
- Do you understand how PTA can assist you with your needs?

A great way to begin to know your community is to set up a meeting at your school site or community center, invite everyone. Introduce the board and committees. Explain what the PTA is, what it stands for, and how it operates. Explain what is expected when you join PTA. Explain why you are inviting and encouraging participation.

Understand that many cultures appreciate a personal invitation and that massive phone calls and emails may be perceived as too cold and impersonal. Invite parents in person!

## Explain to parents what the PTA does.

Many of our newly immigrated families do not understand what the PTA is. Many countries do not have PTA organizations. Many cultures do not expect parent involvement at their schools. It is very important that our parents realize that the public school system in California is designed to involve parents. It is important parents realize the expectation is “participation.”

It is also very important to convey that the PTA is a non-partisan organization. **The PTA is not concerned about the family’s legal status.** The PTA does not share private information with any branches of the government. The PTA’s role is to help all parents and to support them in the process of educating their children.

## Explain how parents can benefit by joining and participating.

It is very hard to adapt; to be new to a country, a language, a culture. There has to be a value for the parents to want to join and help. Yes, their children benefit, their children may become more proficient in school and

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better members of the community, but what about the parents themselves? We as a PTA need to ask what we can do for our multicultural families, not only what we would like them to do.

PTA provides great training that can be applied to many paying jobs. PTA is a great source of networking for parents. Every PTA should be a source of community resources for ALL of our families.

### How to become an inclusive PTA.

Make the effort to invite your ethnic and minority members to serve on the executive board and committees in your units, council, district to reflect the entire school's population. There are many steps to becoming inclusive. We recommend setting realistic goals and developing a plan for implementation.

#### Example:

GOAL: This year, our PTA would like to include more Spanish speaking families.

PLAN: We plan to set up a meeting in Spanish. We plan to have all of our materials translated; we plan to recruit Spanish speakers to our board and committees.

IMPLEMENTATION: We'll ask our teachers to recommend parents. We'll approach parents at a coffee "meet and greet." We'll train parents. We'll find a position that best suits their interests and capabilities.

Just as there are many steps to becoming inclusive, there are many levels. It is good to develop a multiyear plan to provide continuity for the implemented programs and events. **Example**: Last year we were able to increase our number of Spanish-speaking parents working on committees. This year, we plan to promote some of those parents to committee chairs.

Taken from the [12<sup>th</sup> District PTA Multicultural Guide](#) written and edited by Sylvia Cates & Lilly Dollenmayer

