



THE ABC'S OF PARENT INVOLVMENT

GETTING MORE PARENTS TO PARTICIPATE IS AS EASY AS A, B, C
WHEN YOU FOLLOW THIS LIST OF BEST PRACTICES

A is for Asking. If you want people to participate, you must ask. The number one reason people cite for not volunteering: "Nobody asked."

B is for Bake Sales. PTA is no longer just about Bake Sales. We are the largest national child advocacy group.

C is for Communication. Use a variety of communication tools to make sure your message gets through. Flyers and e-mails are good for communicating a date and time. Use your newsletter and Web site to let people know about your accomplishments. Invite local media to activities involving kids.

D is for Diversity. Reach out to all parents in your school, not just the ones who are easy to reach. Sponsor multicultural events. Translate PTA materials, if necessary. Organize transportation for those who need it. Your school, your PTA, and the kids all will benefit tremendously from broad-based parent involvement.

E is for Examine. Look closely at your activities to decide what's working and what isn't. Don't just do something because "that's what we've always done." New ideas create new excitement for your PTA.

F is for Fun. Don't forget the Fun! Some special people will dedicate their time and energy to a group because it's the right thing to do. Many, many more will participate if it's fun. Make sure your group has fun. You'll build involvement and fight burnout, too.

G is for Gratitude. Grateful people are quick to acknowledge the kindness and help they receive from volunteers. Remember to thank your volunteers, your administrators and students.

H is for Hour. An hour is the length to which you should limit your meetings. People worry about time commitments. You have better ways for them to spend their volunteer time than at meetings, so don't hold meetings that go all night. Use your committees to do the detail work. Limit general meetings to one hour, and limit business to finalizing the work of the committees.

I is for Invitation. The best way to get parents involved is to extend a personal invitation. People are most likely to take part in any group when they know someone who already does. Don't send flyers home and then wonder why nobody "signed up." Create situations in which you can communicate with people one on one.

J is for Just. Don't use this word to describe your group. You are doing important work. You should know it, and others should, too. So don't think of your organization as "just a PTA." If you do, you'll have a much harder time getting others involved.

K is for Kindness. Treat everyone with kindness. No act of kindness is ever wasted. As you act with kindness it will draw others into PTA.

L is for Leadership. Being a leader means looking beyond today. Does your group have long-term goals? How will you get there? If you want to get parents excited, share your vision and give them something to work toward.

M is for Marketing. Sing the praises of your parent group. Make sure people know what you do. When you donate an item to the school, put a plaque or sticker on it that gives you credit. When you raise money, make sure people know what their money was able to buy their kids. A little basic marketing goes a long way toward building your reputation with parents -and encouraging parent involvement.

N is for New Parents. Make a special effort to reach out to new parents. Parents new to the school need your help. You can provide them with information about the school, teachers, schedules, and more. Reach out to them early – and individually – to give them a positive feeling about the PTA.

O is for Organization. Make sure you have bylaws. Adopt sound financial practices. File your taxes. Take your group seriously and others will too.

P is for Priorities. Make parent involvement, not fundraising, your priority. Run two or three major fundraisers a year. Then concentrate on activities that get parents connected to the school. The kids, teachers and administrators, and the PTA will benefit.

Q is for Questionnaire. Don't just ask for your volunteers' time; ask for their talents. Use a questionnaire to discover your parent interests. You'll find dedicated volunteers more easily if you match skills to the jobs you need done.

R is for Relationships. Develop relationships with your administrators, teachers and parents. Establish relationships with community leaders and businessmen.

S is for Staff. Remember to invite your staff to join and participate in PTA. Teachers, administrators and support staff are great resources. When staff is involved with the PTA everyone profits.

T is for Training. Don't give anyone, officers or volunteers, a job that they are not ready for. Make sure people know what is expected of them and have the resources and knowledge to do the job. If you don't, volunteers won't return.

U is for Unite. Whenever possible, seek to unite diverse groups. Work together with teachers and administrators, parents of varying ethnic and economic groups, people with variety of views. Make the parent group a source of strength for the school.

V is for Visibility. Be visible at all events. Set up a table at open house, registration, and school activities. Assign a board member to walk around at parent group functions; she should introduce herself and make sure parents are having fun. Put a welcoming face on the PTA.

W is for Welcome. Welcome is how should make people feel. Have a greater at a meeting to welcome newcomers and make sure they feel comfortable. Use name tags so people who don't attend often won't feel left out. Make that first experience a positive one, so people will want to come back.

X is for the eXcitment. Make your PTA exciting. Give awards for jobs well done. Always look for new ways to include others. Make your meetings exciting by inviting student groups to perform or speakers to inform your members.

Y is for the Y-factor. Include the Y-factor (men) in your PTA. Invite them to not only join but participate. Your PTA will be more successful when you engage fathers and positive male figures in the educational and social development of children.

Z is for Zero. Zero in on building parent involvement!