

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Founded in 1897, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is comprised of more than five million members, including parents, students, educators, school administrators, and community leaders. With more than 25,000 local units, PTA flourishes in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Department of Defense schools in Europe and the Pacific. As the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association in the United States, PTA's legacy of influencing federal policy to protect the education, health, and overall well-being of children has made an indelible impact in the lives of millions of children and families. PTA continues to be a voice for children within federal policy; in 2009, PTA will focus primarily on three policy priorities:

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

One of PTA's founding principles is its dedication to engaging parents in the education of their children. Since the PTA's inception, it has provided workshops and resources on child development to parent groups and community leaders. In 1911, PTA agreed to work for a separate home education division within the U.S. Bureau of Education. Quite different from the present-day home schooling movement, home education was an international movement that encouraged parents to become knowledgeable on child development and education issues. The U.S. Bureau of Education created the division and named the PTA president as its director until 1919, when the division became a separate government agency. In recent years, PTA has developed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships as well as assessment tools to measure the success of these standards in schools. Recognizing the importance of parent involvement in a child's education, PTA has worked to ensure that provisions encouraging parental involvement were included in the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), now known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). PTA looks forward to having the opportunity to strengthen parent involvement and engagement in the upcoming reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA-NCLB).

OPPORTUNITY AND EQUITY FOR ALL CHILDREN

From the outset, PTA has championed the importance of equal opportunity for all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, and addressed associated problems of child labor, childhood diseases, and a judicial system more concerned with punishment than with rehabilitation of juveniles. In the 1920s, PTA supported the establishment of a new organization, the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, to provide PTA services in states that maintained separate schools by ethnicity. PTA provided training and literature to the newly established organization so that all parents could be advocates for their children. The organizations continued to work collaboratively until the groups formally merged in 1970. PTA continues to advocate for all children to have the opportunity to grow and achieve through education. To that end, PTA will advocate for adequate funding for schools and for family-focused, strength-based interventions to combat chronic absenteeism, truancy, and juvenile delinquency. As part of its 2009 Public Policy Agenda, PTA will advance its agenda for opportunity and equity for all children with the reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA-NCLB), the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), and federal appropriations to support student achievement and parent engagement.

CHILD HEALTH

PTA has been closely involved with federal health policy since its inception, including pivotal roles in the creation of both the U.S. Public Health Service and the Department of Health and Human Services. In 1923, PTA worked to ensure the provision of hot lunches in schools. In the 1940s and 1950s, PTA was involved in the establishment and expansion of the school milk programs. PTA also worked to ensure the original passage of both the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act. More recently, PTA and its coalition partners fought successfully for the inclusion of language mandating the creation of local school wellness policies in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. In 2009, PTA will be advocating to improve child health and wellness through the reauthorizations of the Child Nutrition Act and the State Children's Health Insurance Program.