



Northwest Cook Region District 37 Dialogue

National Congress of Parents and Teachers
Illinois PTA – District 37 Publication – Winter: 2013

Nicole Fentem, Director

www.ilpta-d37.org

Michele Sheppard, Editor

From Our Director

Thank you for letting us know what your PTA is looking for! I am so impressed: time after time I hear myself asking what the Region Board can do for your PTA and so often the question is left unanswered. Not this time! At our annual meeting, we were asked to share some of the activities from our award application that our PTAs have been proud of doing; our Leadership column will give you a glimpse of just that. We were also asked to hold additional Illinois PTA University courses, our first one is being held on December 9 – Road to Success, please let everyone know. Also, many questions have been coming up regarding the nominating committee election and the function of the nominating committee, so on January 15 we will hold a workshop to help answer your questions. At the same time that night we will be repeating our newest workshop on communication. It was well received this fall and due to the interest shared we are offering it again. So what's my point? We are all in this together and only together can we continue Painting a Brighter Future for OUR Children. The region board will continue to give you the tools you need to be successful, but we need to hear from you as to what are looking for. There is a plethora of knowledge on this PTA board waiting to be utilized, please ask.

As we leave 2013 and move to 2014, most people are reflecting on their successes and looking

towards what they hope to accomplish next. As PTAs we should be doing this as well to help us continue doing phenomenal things for children. Keep in mind the awards available through Illinois PTA while you are doing this. Every year at Convention awards are given for Outstanding Council, Outstanding Newsletter, Outstanding Website, Environmental Concerns, Family School Partnerships, Healthy Students, Juvenile Protection and Safety, Making It Real for Kids, and 100% Membership Award. The only catch is that the PTA must apply to be eligible. Each of these applications can be found on the 2013 Local Unit Packet CD that each unit received in August. The applications are also available to download online at: www.illinoispta.org under the Programs tab in the Award Packet section. Applications for these awards must be postmarked by March 1, 2014, but it's a good idea to get a head start on these. In addition to these awards for the PTA, Illinois PTA is also looking for nominations to recognize the following categories: Outstanding Principal, Outstanding Teacher, Outstanding Volunteer, Outstanding PTSA Student Board Member of the Year, Outstanding Youth Service Leader Award Application. If you have someone that might fit one of these categories, please turn in a nomination application (found on illinoispta.org) no later than February 14, 2014 to the state office.

Nicole

Illinois PTA NWCR/District 37 Director

DATES TO REMEMBER

Dec. 6	Reflections due to District 37 Chair
Dec 9	Road to Success 7 PM SD54 building, SCH
Dec 15	tax filing to IRS (fiscal yr end July 31)
Jan 15	Communications Workshop 7 PM SD25 building, AH
Jan 15	Nominating Committee Workshop 7 PM SD25 building, AH
Feb 14	Outstanding "Person" Award Deadline
Mar 1	PTA Awards Deadline to state office
March 5	Reflections Reception 7 PM South Middle School, AH

SECRETARY – Michele Sheppard

TIPS FOR RECORDING THE MINUTES

- ✍ Write minutes directly into the bound book. NEVER USE A LOOSE LEAF BINDER as pages can be lost.
- ✍ Number pages in consecutive order.
- ✍ Keep minutes from all meetings of the executive board, executive committee, and association in the same minute book.
- ✍ Record minutes that are brief, yet contain all important information needed to check past proceedings.
- ✍ Record what is done, not what is said.
- ✍ Do not reflect the secretary's personal opinion about anything that is said or done.
- ✍ Record the business in the order it happened.
- ✍ Write minutes immediately following the meeting.
- ✍ Send an advance copy of the minutes to the president as soon as they are completed.

- ✍ Record the name of the member who introduced the motion and the results of the vote (carried or lost).
- ✍ Do not record the name of a person who offered the second.
- ✍ Record a ballot vote as follows: number of eligible votes, number of affirmative votes (ayes), and number of negative votes (nos). For an election, include the name of the nominees and the number of votes each nominee received. A motion to destroy the ballots is in order.

TREASURER – Barb Quinn

As we close out the 2013 year, it is time to start looking for next school year's officers. What will you be looking for in a treasurer for your PTA? Maybe the best person for the job is you... Here are some qualities you might want to look for in a treasurer and some duties they will need to uphold.

Qualities

PTA commitment – as a treasurer you must be committed to make sure money is where it needs to be and when it needs to be there.

Attention to detail - be sure checks and balances are utilized.

Organized - the treasurer needs to be sure the entire PTA is organized financially.

Timeliness - money needs to be counted and deposited immediately.

Rule Follower - PTA rules are not meant to be broken as they protect the membership and reduce the risk of mismanagement, error, and confusion.

Duties

- ✓ keep an accurate record of receipts and expenditures;
- ✓ pay out funds in accordance with the budget as approved by the membership and authorized by properly signed vouchers;
- ✓ present a written financial statement at every meeting; and
- ✓ responsible for completion and filing of appropriate IRS forms by deadline.

MEMBERSHIP – Lori Filby

In the real world, December ends one year and January starts another. We get lots of “Best of” lists from the outgoing year and a slew of predictions for the months that lie ahead. We put the past behind us and look forward to future, celebrating, reminiscing and feeling refreshed, refocused and positive.

In the PTA world, we are nowhere near the end of our year. In fact, we are not even at a half-way point and it can be difficult to enter a two week (or more or less) break from school knowing that PTA hits the ground running in the new calendar year. No rest of the weary, right?

Why look at it that way? Why not use this refreshing change of calendar to do a few membership housekeeping chores to give your unit the refocusing it, perhaps, needs? Consider it a natural break in the action and run through a few checks of your membership program:

- Does your unit do a budget review in January or February? If so, check your budget line item for local membership dues. How close are you to that number? If you projected \$200 in income, but are only at \$100, you know what you are half way to your goal for the year. Great! But this is a budget review. Will you be achieving this goal? Now is a good time to meet with your membership team to make these decisions.
- How’s your membership plan coming along? Have you done all the mailings you intended to do? Community members, elected officials, school administration, new families in your school since the start of the year. And don’t forget to check your school’s faculty and staff. Strive for 100% of these folks. They have a vested interest in your students’ success.
- Did you know donations to your local unit are tax deductible? As we end 2013, a quick email or mailing reminding your parents and staff of this might garner you some

additional members and possibly some unanticipated income.

- Have you thanked your current membership? Drop them a quick email letting them know how much you appreciate them. While you are at it, update them on what you’ve done so far in this school year and where you are heading in the coming months. Don’t forget to share your upcoming meeting dates and times, especially your general membership meetings.
- Did you deliver on your promise of delivering incentives? If you were giving a free school car cling with each membership, did you mail all of those out?
- When was the last time you sent in membership dues? Remember that you can send dues payments to the state office all throughout the year. If you’ve welcomed new members since the October 1 dues were paid, send those in now. No time like the present!

Don’t worry that your “year” is only partially finished. Spring is still on the horizon and another break is coming! Membership never takes a break, so keep on recruiting and rockin’ PTA!



REFLECTIONS – Joan Scovic

2013-2014 Theme: Believe, Dream, Inspire

Projects are due to the Region Reflections Assistant by December 6th.

Units without a council should make sure that we know if you are submitting projects.



PARENT ED – Matthew Rodriguez

In a time where bullying and teasing is so widespread we MUST make sure we teach our children how to have great self-esteem! The article, “Helping Kids Cope With Cliques” from Kidshealth.org, reinforces just this. Remember, there is a fine line between thinking too much of one self and believing in one self, do not misunderstand. It is important we also stay humble as well.

We have seen most cliques in middle and high school but believe it or not they are in our elementary schools as well. The kids feel excluded from a certain group or don't know why a group of so called “friends” will not speak to them anymore. It is at that moment that we need to teach them to have the strength to be their own person: to believe in themselves. That if that group is a group of real friends, things will blow over quickly and if not, they weren't real friends to begin with.

I know this is all well and good to say but making it happen and more importantly helping our kids believe it is another matter. This article offers three strong suggestions in it to teach our kids about healthy friendships.

- **FINDING THE RIGHT FIT NOT JUST FITTING IN-** it is important we ask our children what their interests are and give them the opportunity to form meaningful friendships that can last if they are based on common ground.
- **STICK TO YOUR LIKES-** our children change their mind everyday and as the wind blows. Let's help them make sure the reason they changed their mind is not ONLY because one of their classmates says something is cool or not.
- **KEEP SOCIAL CIRCLES OPEN AND DIVERSE-** As this world is comprised of several different people from ALL walks of life it would be great for our children to learn about the differences that exist. It will even help them in the future as they deal with different personalities, races, and cultures such as in the workplace.

It is also imperative that we work with our children to take responsibility for their own actions. We

must teach them to be confident about their decisions and take ownership for them. Hopefully, they will think carefully about their actions, before they take them. It would be nice to help them understand why they chose one decision or another but depending on age groups that may be more challenging.

I hope this has provided food for thought.

Ref: <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/cliques.html#>

HEALTH/SAFETY – Joyce Stenzel

Helping Children Be Their Best

From www.pta.org/programs

Great Expectations: What's the Best Way for Parents to Help Children Be Their Best

By Patricia Sullivan

All parents have similar dreams for their children. For some, it's dreams of their sons being NFL quarterbacks or architects. For others, it's their daughters growing up to be concert pianists or doctors. For others still, it's being the first in their family to graduate from college or to earn a doctorate. The common thread through all these dreams is children growing up to fulfill their parents' expectations of success. To some extent, all parents transmit these dreams to their children in the form of expectations. Many parents believe that transmitting a sense of high expectations to children is one way parents infuse them with confidence, self-esteem, and personal standards of merit and value. But too much expectation to succeed can be crushing, and in some cases as destructive as telling children they're not good enough. The key is balance.

Expectations fall into two main categories: behaviors and accomplishments. Behaviors are the character traits parents want their children to develop or exhibit, such as good manners, ambition, diligence, and responsibility. Accomplishments usually are either academic (school performance) or recreational, in activities such as athletics, art, or music that are supposed to be fun and enriching. Knowing what should be expected of a child at any given age is a good start toward setting reasonable expectations.

HEALTH/SAFETY – continued

That special something

"Parents need to be realistic," said William Sears, a San Clemente, California, pediatrician and parenting educator. "Identify your children's special something. What are they good at? What are their skills? Create an environment that fosters them," he said. In this way, "You can have expectations because you know they're good at that one particular thing."

Setting these realistic expectations based on a child's strengths will go a long way toward building the kind of confidence that is essential to long-term successes. "I'm a firm believer in setting up a child to succeed," said Sears, the father of eight.

Parents need to consider what it is that they want for their children and whether how they act on those expectations will actually help their children achieve those goals. All parents want their children to grow up to be happy, healthy, and strong. Setting high expectations is one way many parents think they are working toward those goals. But if children are pushed to perform at levels for which they aren't ready, the result will be the opposite of what parents want. Instead of developing confidence, children may become afraid of taking risks, for example. Instead of being proud of their accomplishments, children can begin to feel like sources of disappointment for their parents.

Listen up

Children will let parents know when they're overwhelmed, either directly or indirectly. "They'll tell you if [something's] too hard for them," said Janine Bempechat, author of *Against the Odds: How "At-Risk" Students Exceed Expectations*. When parents hear children say something like "I hate reading" or "I hate the violin," that's a very clear sign to step back. According to Bempechat, the goal is for children to be self-motivated, so proceed slowly and listen carefully to what they are saying.

Parents should build on children's strengths and offer support, said Martha Pieper, a Chicago clinical social worker who, with husband William Pieper, a psychiatrist, has written *Smart Love*. "Let children struggle as long as they're happy struggling," she said. "If they're uncomfortable, show them you'll

help them when they ask. You want to offer positive, helpful encouragement."

What is success?

According to Bempechat, the skills most essential to success aren't academic ones: "It's the smartest kids who often fall apart at the first sign of failure. Being smart isn't necessarily going to help you. But knowing how to pace yourself, how to keep going when you're completely stuck, and how to ask for help will."

The overriding concern parents have in setting expectations is their children's future success. But those expectations can have a negative effect if parents don't teach children the lessons they need to negotiate life. It's those life lessons—not academic knowledge or recreational skills, but qualities like diligence, perseverance, and responsibility—that will have the greatest effect on their lives. Parents need to remember that making sure their children acquire those skills is more important in the long run than whether a child gets an A on a report card or wins a swimming meet.

NEWSLETTER – Michele Sheppard

As the editor of your PTA newsletter, it is your job to provide your members with information that is clear, concise and correct. It is also your job to present the information in a way that is attractive and easy to read.



Do your best to make sure there are no spelling, grammar or punctuation errors. The appearance of your newsletter may vary with the level of school it represents. PTA units at elementary schools may have more casual, playful layouts, while high school PTA newsletters will likely be more professional looking.

Be sure your newsletter reflects the PTA basic policies. PTA is noncommercial, nonsectarian and nonpartisan. Respect all of the cultures in your school community and do not jeopardize your nonprofit status by advertising for businesses.

And finally, never distribute the newsletter until it has been read by at least two proofreaders and until it has been read and approved by the PTA president and the school principal.

LEADERSHIP – Tracey Coleman

Looking for new program ideas?

Is your PTA stuck in a programming rut? If it's harder to get volunteers each year for the same tried and true events, or if attendance is dwindling, maybe it's time to try something new. Fortunately, you don't have to look very far for inspiration; with so many PTAs in Northwest Cook Region, there are lots of good ideas! I have summarized a few of the successful programs shared by PTAs in their Honor Award applications for 2012-13; feel free to contact them for more information:

Backpacks & Snacks – Stevenson PTA

Stevenson PTA added a new element to the traditional “meet the teacher/drop off supplies” event before school starts. Concerned that many students were bringing unhealthy snacks to school, the PTA worked with teachers and staff to identify some healthy options. Then the PTA partnered with the local Meijer grocery store to provide each student with 3 healthy snacks for the first week of school, along with recipe suggestions.

Family Game Night – Armstrong PTA and Paddock PTA

Armstrong PTA cleaned out closets and scoured garage sales to provide board games for an evening of play, promoting interaction among kids and also letting parents meet their children's friends. They reported seeing many new families at this event. Paddock PTA held a similar event at Back to School Night, with teachers and parent volunteers leading educational and fun games for families.

Mini-courses/After School Specials – Kimball Hill PTA, Pleasant Hill PTA, and Winston Campus Elementary PTA

Mini-courses (also known as After School Specials at some schools) are enrichment activities designed to teach kids new skills, expose them to new experiences, and/or promote healthy lifestyle activities. Courses are typically held after school once a week for a few weeks, with different courses offered each week tailored to various ages and interests. Parent and staff volunteers as well as outside companies teach the courses, for little to no cost.

Multicultural Fair – Hoover PTA, Kimball Hill PTA, Lincoln Prairie PTSA, Paddock PTA, and Jane Addams PTA (Palatine)

Multicultural or “Taste and Touch” events are designed to showcase the diverse heritage found in a school community. Booths are often set up by country and attendees travel with a “passport” to sample food, play games, and learn about different cultures. Music and dance performances are popular entertainment.

Winter Activity Night – Thomas Middle School PTA

Thomas PTA worked with the school's P.E. teachers to provide a fun night for middle school students. They organized a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, Dance Dance Revolution competitions, and a “Minute to Win It” style game show.

SCHOLARSHIP – Jeanne Hamilton

The first scholarship that Illinois PTA offered was in 1935. Since that time, the world of teaching and education has changed in many ways. So too, has the Lillian E. Glover Scholarship—this year perhaps more than most.

The Lillian E. Glover Scholarship continues to encourage students entering the Field of Education or Education Related Degree Programs, but due to declining financial horizons for the Scholarship Program, only two Scholarships will be offered for the state of Illinois. The first place recipient will receive \$3000 and the second place recipient will receive \$2000.

If you know of an exceptional high school student who is pursuing an education or education related degree, please encourage them to apply. For a 2013-2014 applications and more information, please see the Illinois PTA website: <http://www.illinoispta.org/Scholarship/ScholarshipApp13.14.pdf>. The application needs to be postmarked on or before February 14, 2014. Some information does need to be obtained from the school, so do not wait until the 14th to start the application!

Good Luck to NWCR/District 37 high school seniors!

MORE LEADERSHIP – Tracey Coleman

Nominating Committee: It's Time to Get Going!

By now, your PTA should have its nominating committee members elected (yes, elected according to your bylaws, not appointed by the President). In order to for PTA members to elect a slate of officers in the spring, the nominating committee needs time to find suitable candidates and to post the slate with the required notice, usually 30 days before the election meeting. So it's time for the committee to get to work.

Illinois PTA has a brochure that outlines the role of the nominating committee: <http://illinoispta.org/ALUP2013/ADMINISTRATIVE/06.Nominating%20Procedures.pdf>. This is a good place for the committee to start, but we encourage all nominating committee members to attend Northwest Cook Region's Nominating Committee Workshop on **January 15 at 7:00pm at the Arlington Heights District 25 offices.**

The workshop will cover the duties and responsibilities of the nominating committee members, plus hot topics such as:

- What happens if we can't find someone to fill a position?
- Should the principal attend the nominating committee meetings?
- Does each candidate on the slate have to have unanimous approval from the committee?
- Can we nominate co-officers for a position?
- What is the role of the alternate members of the nominating committee?

Thanks to all who have been elected to PTA nominating committees – you have important work ahead of you! We hope to see you at our workshop!

ILLINOIS PTA NEWS

Resolution on Energy Drinks

It's easy to bring attention to this health issue!

1. Just copy and paste this article into your next newsletter:

Energy Drinks - Not for Our Children!

A single Energy Drink can contain as much as 500 mg of caffeine –as much caffeine as 14 cans of a caffeinated soft drink –enough to result in caffeine toxicity!

Heavy caffeine consumption, such as drinking energy drinks, has been associated with serious health problems including seizures, mania, stroke and sudden death.

Children with certain health issues (including mood disorders, cardiovascular problems, kidney or liver disease) may be at higher risk. Of the caffeine overdoses reported in 2007, 46% occurred in those younger than 19 years old.

Yet, even with these known issues, and - even though the American Academy of Pediatrics believes that energy drinks are not appropriate for youths -these drinks are sold in Illinois without age restrictions! In fact, an estimated 30% - 50% of adolescents and young adults consume these beverages.

We are asking all of our parents, teachers, and school administrators to resolve to keep Energy Drinks out of the hands of youths! As part of this promise, we will not serve, sell, or have available any Energy Drinks at any school or PTA function or event.

Do you have questions on how you can help?
Please contact:

(Insert name and contact information of your PTA President, Health Issues Chairperson, or other designated PTA representative)

2. Place this issue on your agenda for your next PTA meeting as part of your awareness efforts. Related research and articles may be found in the footnotes/references for the article, "Energy Drinks: A Legal but Dangerous Beverage".
3. Stay up to date on related legislation with the Illinois PTA legislation network! Not signed up yet? Just go to: <http://capwiz.com/npta2/il/mlm/signup/>, and add your contact information!

LEGISLATION

Source: SPD in the Community, November 19, 2013

Hands-Free Cellphone Use While Driving Starts Jan. 1, 2014

Illinois House Bill HB-1247 recently amended the Illinois Vehicle Code, (Section 12-610 Electronic Communications Devices). Specifically the law states; "A person may not operate a motor vehicle on a roadway while using an electronic communication device." The law defines such as device, including but not limited to a hand-held wireless telephone, hand-held personal digital assistant, or a portable or mobile computer. A GPS or navigation system or a device that is physically or electronically integrated into the motor vehicle is exempt.

An electronic communications device *may* be used in a motor vehicle (by the driver) for the sole purpose of reporting an emergency situation and continued communication with emergency personnel during the emergency situation; or while the device is being used in hands-free or voice-operated mode (which may include a headset); or while parked on the shoulder of a road-way.

We all know the use of a hand held communication device while driving is a dangerous distraction that has led to many deaths and serious injuries on Illinois roadways. It is a common belief among traffic safety experts that the actual number of crashes due to hand held device distraction is much higher than reported. The Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police believe enforcement of this law beginning January 1, 2014 has the potential to reduce severe injuries and prevent needless fatalities. Law enforcement agencies are preparing to rigorously enforce this law beginning the first day it is effective.

DISTRICT 37 COUNCIL CORNER

Northwest Suburban Council of PTAs

As we move through the first half of our school year, we maintain a continued focus on "The Keys" – our getting-back-to-basics focus on leadership,

membership and training. We are proud of our PTA Units whose commitment and talent led our Council to an award-winning evening at our regional annual meeting and dinner. 15 of our 20 PTAs won awards...Congratulations to our local units on their success!

A primary focus for our Council this coming year is the rejuvenation of our NWSC PTA/PTSA Coat Closet into a more comprehensive program offering a full range of clothing for the children and families of District 15. Led by our Health and Safety Chair, Susan Rogers, and partnering with community organizations and Palatine schools, we hope to launch an expanded closet in the near future, ensuring that the members of our Council community are able to get their clothing needs fulfilled within our own spaces.

Our SPARK Committee also continues its monthly outreach with the upcoming programming:

Monday, January 27th

Emotional Self Regulation

Does your child get easily frustrated? Do you get frustrated in trying to figure out how to help him/her calm down? Come learn how you can understand the cycle of escalation, identify preventative techniques, and apply some practical solutions.

Monday, February 24th

Sensory Integration Disorders

Becky Malonie, head of OT at Arlington Pediatric Therapy, discusses what sensory issues are, how to recognize them, and offers some tricks to use at home or at school.

For more details, go to:
http://www.ccsd15.net/files/_rdER6_/06277411069304e33745a49013852ec4/SPARKFlyer2013-14.pdf

On behalf of all of us at the Northwest Suburban Council, we wish all of our PTA friends a Happy 2014!

Julie O'Hara
NWSC President

COUNCIL CORNER continued

Arlington Heights Council of PTAs

Some of us remember the Friday Packet. The one you actually held in your hand and flipped through. Page after page of information, permission slips, reminders. Not that long ago, the Friday Packet was the main means of communication. Friday morning a few volunteers would stand at a long table and assemble all the handouts to be sent home through backpack mail. At the end of the table, another volunteer would use the industrial strength stapler, since a regular hand held one wasn't as quick or powerful enough for all that paper. Someone else would then count out how many "youngest/only" packets were needed for each class. Some Fridays there would be five or six pages, other times there were more. Think of how much paper was sent home in a school every Friday! If a child forgot to bring it home, a parent had to hope it would be remembered on Monday. We have come a long way in communication in just a short time. Now we send information out through email blasts, websites, and social media. Today there are many different ways to communicate, but which ways are the most effective?

It seems that no matter how hard a family works to keep the family calendar up to date, every once in a while there will be a breakdown in communication. Someone forgot to put a meeting on the calendar, or there isn't a ride to practice available the one time it's really needed. How is the miscommunication handled? The same might also be true with communication in your PTA. How do you reach parents who can't attend your PTA meeting? Who doesn't remember to check the Friday packet online? Who are new to the school, the district, or even the northwest suburbs? We need to always look for the best way to communicate, but also an alternative way to share information. Many of us have smart phones, but not all of us are on Facebook, for example. Don't assume what works for you will work for everyone in your PTA. Check in often with your committee chairs and your parents. The digital world makes that much easier to do: send out a quick email or text. Paper communication is a thing of the past. Now there are

links to click on, information to "like" and easy ways to make sure the information is added to the calendar. Not all of our PTA communication needs to be digital. There is one other useful and often forgotten tool we need to remember to use...the telephone!

So this holiday, observe the ways you effectively communicate with your friends and loved ones and when you come back in the new year, keep in mind the good ways to keep your PTA members informed. Happy Holidays and have a wonderful New Year!

*Julie Birenbaum and Michelle Gledhill
AHC Co-presidents*

Schaumburg Township Council of PTAs

The beginning of the New Year means the Schaumburg Township Council is planning two of our favorite programs – our Scholarship Programs and our annual Auction to benefit the scholarship fund.

Applications for the STCs High School Scholarship are available right now at our website and at the College and Career Centers throughout School District 211. Eligible students must be graduating seniors that attended a School District 54 Elementary school for one year and a School District 54 junior high for two years. The scholarships applications for the STC High School scholarship can be found at <http://pta.sd54.org/high-school-scholarship/>.

STC also has an Elementary Summer Scholarship Program. This is a member benefit that STC gives to the PTA members within the units that make up the council. Scholarships are applied towards summer camps, programs or activities that the member's child goes to. Applications for that program will be available soon.

To raise money for both of these worthwhile programs, STC holds an Auction with all proceeds going to our Scholarship Fund. It will be a great night benefiting kids through PTA. We are looking forward to doing great things this upcoming year!

*Mikel Eppenbaugh
STC President*



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NATIONAL PTA NEWS

National PTA Endorses Bill to Expand Pre-K Access

On Nov. 13, the Strong Start for America's Children Act was introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Representatives George Miller (D-Calif.) and Richard Hanna (R-N.Y.). The Act would increase access to and quality of programs for children from birth to kindergarten. The National PTA supports programs that further the success of our earliest learners and has endorsed this legislation. To learn more about the Start Strong for America's Children Act, visit [PTA's website](#) or review the full [bill summary](#).

Sequester Updates

The Government Affairs team has prepared an [action alert](#) asking Congress to replace the harmful sequester cuts with a balanced, fair approach. Take action today to make your voice heard! NDD United has released a [report](#) on the effects of the sequester. Visit PTA.org/Advocacy for more info on the sequester!

National PTA - Tell Us What You Think for a Chance to Win \$500

We want to know what you think of this year's [Back-to-School Kit](#). Take the [Back-to-School Kit survey](#) to weigh in on the kit's format, content and usability. This 13-question survey takes approximately three minutes to complete and will directly impact next year's kit. Once you've successfully completed the survey, your PTA will be entered into a drawing to win \$500!

[Take the Survey.](#)

