GUIDELINES

PTA communications should help PTA members and the general public understand that PTA is

- A volunteer association of parents, teachers, students and other concerned citizens.

- An action-oriented organization working for the well-being of children and youth.

PURPOSES OF PTA PUBLICATIONS

- Encourage and highlight involvement with the child in the home and in the school.

- Inform every family in the school of the aims and accomplishments of the unit.

- Encourage and highlight attendance at PTA meetings and parent involvement in PTA projects and activities.

- Foster cooperation with the school in keeping parents informed about school functions.

- Inform the community about PTA activities and school functions.

- Express appreciation to those participating in or contributing to programs.

PTA PUBLICATIONS

- Adhere to PTA noncommercial, nonpartisan and nonsectarian policies (Background for Communications 6.2.2; Basic Policies for All PTAs 1.3).

- All material is to be cleared with the PTA president and school principal before printing. The principal is responsible for the accuracy of school information and compliance with the State Education Code and school district policy. The PTA president is responsible for the accuracy of PTA information and compliance with PTA policies.

- Never present material critical of any individual or group. To do so may very well expose the PTA to a libel suit.

- Avoid publishing the last name and telephone number of a volunteer who handles PTA funds.

- Only publish a summary of actions taken from the PTA association meeting.

- Do not publish, without written permission, personal information about students or adults. This includes:

  – Photographs of students or adults (with/without first or full names) (See *Toolkit,* Forms, Chapter 9, Photography Release);

  – Home addresses and/or telephone/cellphone numbers of students or adults;

  – E-mail addresses of students or adults; and

  – Student or adult class schedules.

- Do not give identification in student bylines that would identify classrooms (e.g., Art-work by John L., third grade).

- Date all materials.

- Always make it easy for the reader to identify and find the Website Coordinator. List the following items:

  – Name of the unit, council or district PTA;

  – Contact information (units should use school address, council and district PTAs should use office or mailing address);

  – Names of PTA levels to which the local PTA belongs (council or district PTA, California State PTA, and National PTA).

  – Include an e-mail address and telephone number, so that people can be reached for more information about the organization.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING CONTENT

- Feedback is necessary to find out whether the publication is achieving its goals. Take an opinion poll at an executive board meeting. Include a questionnaire on the website to learn which information is most helpful to readers.

- Encourage others to contribute to the website. Tell them how much space is available for articles.

- Make suggestions that encourage others to contribute.

- Be on the alert for coming events that should be publicized. Go after stories.

- Report the results of events, publicize membership campaigns, or announce PTA award recipients.

- Remember, people do not read, they skim. Make sure the message is easy to find. Keep things brief and to the point. Strategically use bullets, quotes, charts, and graphics.

- Graphic design should be clean and simple. Avoid graphics that overwhelm the reader and distract from your content.

- Proofread everything!

TRANSLATING MATERIALS

- PTAs should work closely with the school to meet the language needs of all in the PTA community who may visit the website.

- To translate information and materials, seek help from bilingual parents on the executive board, teachers or support personnel in the classrooms or the school district, or the foreign language departments at local high schools, community colleges and universities.

ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS: WEBSITE

- When designing a website, remember that less is more.

- Think strategically about the content and design of the site. The most important step in site development is navigational design and planning. How you structure the site will determine whether users can access the information that they need.

- Plan for maintenance. If funds are allocated for the website, do not spend the entire budget on the initial development.

- Every page should have a purpose. The quality of each page is determined by how well it serves its purpose.

- Determine if the website will be hosted through a county office of education, the school district, or paid for by a local PTA. Obtain bids from at least three service providers.

- Whether the website construction will be done commercially or by a volunteer:

  – Forward edited copy (preferably on computer disk) by the expected date;

  – Mark a sample hard copy so instructions are clear;

  – Keep a duplicate disk back-up of the copy submitted; and

  – Beta test before the pages are posted publicly.

- Links to California State PTA and National PTA website information are typically more cost and time effective than repeating the same material.

- If the PTA has a website, the e-newsletter is an easy way to promote the site and generate new users. Keep the e-newsletter brief; provide short summaries of new information available on the site and include links to the specific pages being discussed. This allows the reader to get a preview and jump to the site easily. (Sample e-newsletter Fig.6-2.)

- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) can work hand-in-hand with a website. Positings there can drive members to the website, while the website can include links to a PTA's social media presence.

WEBSITE COORDINATOR

- Review www.capta.org and www.pta.org.

- Subscribe to *PTA in California*, *The Communicator* and *Our Children* (Resources and Subscriptions in the Introductory section of the *California State PTA Toolkit*). The cost of PTA subscriptions is a legitimate PTA expense.

- Follow council or district PTA guidelines and attend workshops for publications chairmen.

- As the new editor of a website, gather all available information from predecessor. Review past issues. Study websites from other unit, council and district PTAs. Secure samples from council or district PTA (Online Communications 6.2.5).

- Include the cost of materials – paper, ink, computer software, etc. – in the unit budget.

- Set website due dates and stick to them. Advise contributors of the due dates frequently. Ask the PTA president to include the items "website article assignments" and "publication copy due dates" on all meeting agendas.

- Encourage officers and chairmen to keep you informed about their projects, and urge them to contribute short articles and reports for the newsletter. Advise all potential contributors that material will be edited for space and form (grammar, punctuation, spelling and accuracy of information).

- California State PTA materials may be reprinted; please credit the source. Read National PTA materials carefully to determine when permission to reprint is required. Observe copyright laws by obtaining permission to reprint all non-PTA materials (Sample Request for Use of Copyrighted Material 6.2.2d; Fig. 6-1).

- Keep a well-organized procedure book, including the following information, for the next coordinator:

  – Number of postings

  – Copy deadline for e-newsletter and Web updates

  – Materials, supplies, software and equipment

  – For electronic medium: Internet service provider, e-mail account names and passwords, Webmaster name and address

  – Council and district PTA publication chairman contact information. Advise council and district PTA if you post a website.

  – Contact information for Webmasters for the California State and National PTAs to establish a link from their websites to yours.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS

- Develop a plan to reach all members, whether they are on- or off-track.

- Post website changes right before track goes off and right before track returns.

NECESSARY INFORMATION

- PTA's history; Purposes of the PTA; Mission Statement of the California State PTA; California State PTA Core Values; California State PTA Legislation Platform; and the PTA's basic policies, procedures, and programs (Know the PTA 1.1 and Legislation Platform 4.2.4).

- PTA Style Guide, *Toolkit*, Forms, Chapter 9.

- The local media: who they are, who is interested in PTA issues, and how to contact them.

- Current PTA information, publications, names of officers and chairmen, and schedule of events.

RESOURCES

- The addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mails of PTA officers and chairmen.

- Helpful tools: computer with Internet access.

- Reference materials: grammar book, dictionary, thesaurus, and *California State PTA Toolkit*.

10/2010