



New Jersey PTA[®]

Local PTA Committees Handbook

A digital version of this handbook and all other Local PTA Handbooks can be found at www.njpta.org/resources.

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Leadership Resources:

In the “Resources” section of the New Jersey PTA website you will find resources available exclusively to PTA members. This page contains Leadership Packet materials, Financial Guides and a variety of resources for PTA officers and members. Call the NJPTA office at 609-587-0100 if you have any questions.

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PTA Vision

Every child’s potential is a reality

PTA Mission

To make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

How to Use Committees

Working on a committee can be a rewarding experience. This is particularly true when committee members are selected for the contributions they can make and are made to feel that it is a privilege to be asked to serve.

Committees are one of the most important areas in any local PTA and, when working effectively, can make the following contributions:

- Committees can do the bulk of the work for the Board of Directors. When properly selected, committees can relieve a larger group of the many details necessary to carry on the activities for the association.
- Committees provide an opportunity for individuals to do the kind of work for which they are especially suited. Members develop a sense of worth and personal satisfaction as they contribute to the total work of the PTA.
- Committees provide the potential for training leaders. The combination of inexperienced members working with experienced members provides valuable apprenticeship for greater leadership responsibilities in the future.
- Through widespread representation, more ideas are generated, which provide more creative solutions to problems, more meaningful development of programs and projects, and an improved organization.
- Committees permit membership participation and, as a result, the needs and desires of the people to be served are more likely to be met. This also permits greater access to various resources.

Advantages of Committees

Because fewer people make up a committee, there are more opportunities for each member to take part in the activities of the PTA. Committees can work more effectively on many tasks. The size of the committee is determined by the nature of the task(s) and the representation needed.

The procedures can be informal, with individuals being more likely to freely discuss and make greater contributions. Members are more interested in the task at hand, having been specifically selected for the task(s). Delicate, embarrassing, or controversial subjects can be handled more openly. There are more opportunities to consult outside experts or authorities. A small group can operate more efficiently when a larger number of choices are available. Committee members can narrow the number of alternatives that the Board would, otherwise, need to consider.

Selecting the Committee

The Size of the Committee

The major reason for appointing/electing a committee is the advantage of greater efficiency and flexibility of a small group. The purpose of the committee is the first consideration in determining its size. The optimum number of people needed to accomplish the goals of the committee will determine the size.

The Chairman

The chairman's primary responsibility is to give leadership to the members of the group and to stimulate them to their highest capabilities. The chairman is someone who has the ability to organize the individual members into a working group. The chairman is not necessarily the one who has the most knowledge about the topic at hand, or who does all of the work.

The Members

Participation makes a considerable difference in the success of a PTA, its Board, and its members. Selection of committee members should not be left to "chance." There are many important considerations to be made.

- Who has a special interest in the kinds of activities or the subject for discussion in which the committee will be involved?
- Who has the knowledge and skills needed by the committee? In some instances, Board positions indicate committee assignments.
- Who could benefit most by the opportunity of working with members who have had more experience? This speaks to growth for potential leaders.
- Who has access to resources needed to do the job? While this is an important point, care should be taken not to overload certain key individuals. Keep in mind also that a potential leader will seek out necessary resources.
- Is the committee comprised of board members and general members with different opinions or points of view?

The nature of the committee assignment will determine if any, or all, of these factors need attention.

Specific Duties and Responsibilities

A committee **has only** the authority that it is specifically given. Written instructions help to define what the committee is expected to do. In some instances, it is wise to inform the committee as to its powers. How far can it go? Can the committee spend money? Can it make commitments on behalf of the association?

A Committee must present its plan of work for approval to the Board of Directors. (See Article X, Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 of your PTA bylaws.)

Time of Reporting

In order to make the assignment(s) definite, the time of reporting should be specified. When progress or interim reports are desired, the due date(s) should be indicated.

Budget

If money is to be allocated, the amount should be specified, and the general spending purposes should be stated.

Coordination with Other Committees

It may be desirable for two or more committees to confer from time to time. This is particularly important when one committee is dependent in some way upon the work of another committee.

Supporting Material

Any material, such as reports of previous committees, and records that may help the committee carry on its work, should be made available. All material should be placed in a procedure book and passed on to the next committee chair.

Instructing The Committee

The importance of clearly defined goals cannot be minimized. The responsibilities of committee members should be explained in order to develop increased personal involvement and productivity.

To be certain that each member will have a clear idea of what is to be done, the committee assignment should be written, and a copy should be given to each member of the committee.

The following are suggestions to define a committee:

Name the Committee - The name of a committee not only helps to identify it, but it also helps to define the nature of the subject matter on which the committee will focus its attention.

Type of Committee - A "Standing Committee" has a continuing existence. A "Special Committee" is dismissed as soon as the specific task is completed and the final report given.

Purpose - The purpose or function of the committee is often implied in the name. Stating the function helps to set the boundaries of the committee's activities; it may not necessarily define specific responsibilities.

Committee Operation

Parliamentary Procedure

Committee members should have an understanding of the generally accepted procedures of committee operation. Committee operation and size permit informality and flexibility. The rules of parliamentary procedure in regard to motions, seconds, and general formality can, for the most part, be replaced by the use of general consent or consensus.

Small groups can proceed more easily when:

- There is a relaxed and supportive atmosphere;
- The leader is a facilitator rather than a dictator;
- Members understand that decisions can be best reached after discussion rather than before discussion and
- Attention is focused on the job to be accomplished rather than on the formal rules of procedures.

The Chairman's Role

It is a general practice for the chair to enter into the discussion and participate in-group decisions, just as any other member. Members should understand that they have a shared responsibility. The chair has the additional responsibility of ensuring that the committee is always appreciated by those involved.

A productive committee is possible when:

- Committee members, together, develop a plan of work;
- The meeting is informal;
- Everyone participates;
- A "WE" spirit and attitude exists;
- Thinking is stimulated;
- Members are interested; and
- Decisions are reached.

The Agenda

A written agenda for committee meetings is very useful. An agenda helps to keep attention on, and to help emphasize the reason for, the work of the committee. It helps the members to see how and where they can make their greatest contribution. When received by members before the meeting, the agenda promotes preparation for the task(s).

Minutes of the Committee Meeting

Minutes of a committee are generally more complete than those of a business meeting because they form the basis of the committee report. For this reason, the secretary should be chosen for the ability to record the heart of the discussion for later use by the group. Minutes for committee meetings should be made

available to its members, but need not be made available to others.

Ex-Officio Members

Ex-officio means that an individual is a member by right of the office that he/she holds. An ex-officio member has the same rights and duties as any other member, but is not expected to attend all of the required meetings, nor be counted as part of the majority. Local PTA Bylaws Article X, Section 5, state that the president is ex-officio of all committees with the exception of the nominating committee and the audit committee.

Committee Reports

All committees are obligated to report to their creating bodies updates on activities and/or recommendations for action. All committee reports should be general and should be submitted in writing, except if the report is brief and for information purposes only.

A committee report should always be worded in the third person and begin with identification of the committee submitting – the name of the committee in the case of a standing committee – or the subject that was referred in the case of a special committee. Example: “The Committee on _____ reports that _____”.

With authority and approval of his/her committee, the committee chair should give the committee report. The body of the report states how the committee researched or reached its conclusions. The final paragraph states the recommendation/motion, if needed, of the committee, and may be submitted in the following ways:

- In the form of a resolution;
- As a statement
- As a guideline
- As a financial proposal
- As a recommendation/motion for consideration by a larger group.

At the conclusion of the PTA year, each standing committee should give its final report. This report is a summary of the committee’s activities for the entire year, and it should be included in the procedure book.

Special committees submit a final report at the conclusion of their activity and go out of existence upon acceptance of their report. They should include their final report in the procedure book.

Committee Records

(To be included in the Procedure Book)

A complete record of the committee’s activities should be maintained and to include the following:

- List of committee members
- Record of committee meetings – dates, places, times
- Calendar/timeline to accomplish committee goals
- Record of PTA volunteers involved – in what capacity
- Facility records (when booking a facility for meetings/events) – name of contact, phone number, cost, written contract, and other pertinent information
- Accurate account of funds expended. Include receipts for supplies purchased, printing, postage, etc.
- Accurate record of donated supplies (door prizes, paper goods, food, etc.)
- Record of all publicity used – local PTA newsletter, council newsletter, radio, local television stations, posters, local/city newspapers, school building publications, etc.
- Copy of all handouts, flyers, invitations, thank-you notes (both given and received)
- Telephone polls taken of committee members
- Evaluation: It is very important to evaluate the committee’s work at the end of the PTA year and to make recommendations for the upcoming year’s committee.

Recommended Committees From New Jersey And National PTA And Their Areas Of Concern Membership

The Membership Committee keeps and maintains membership records, promotes membership enrollment, processes applications for membership awards, and keeps the treasurer informed of membership enrollment for payment of dues.

Budget And Finance

The Budget and Finance Committee prepares the proposed budget for the PTA year and submits it to the Board of Directors for approval and to the general membership for adoption. The Budget and Finance Committee monitors the spending of the PTA to ensure that the approved/adopted budget is not exceeded.

Arts in Education

The Arts in Education Committee encourages people of all ages to participate in the arts, and it encourages the use of cultural arts programs for classroom study, as well as for extracurricular activities.

Family Engagement

The Family Engagement Committee promotes education for responsible parenting for both current and future parents. It encourages formation of pre-school PTAs or pre-school committees; it educates members about support services for families, and it plans parent awareness programs.

Legislative Activities

The Legislative Activities Committee provides members with information about current legislative issues; it encourages local PTA participation on issues of proposed laws that affect the education, health and welfare of children and youth, and it cooperates with other similarly concerned groups.

Health And Safety

The Health and Safety Committee promotes awareness and programs concerning health and safety issues that affect the child, and it promotes programs for parents regarding the same.

Education

The Education Committee promotes awareness and programs concerning educational issues. It also encourages participation in state and local educational issues.

Reflections

The Reflections Committee promotes students to express themselves through any of the four areas of art, and coordinates entries from the local and county for submission to the state PTA chair for judging.

Procedure And Bylaws

The Procedure and Bylaws Committee encourages and educates members as to the value of using proper meeting procedures and adhering to the bylaws. This committee may also be assigned to review local PTA bylaws before submitting them to NJPTA for approval every three years, or for an amendment to the local PTA bylaws.

Note: Additional committees may be established to meet the needs of the local PTA.

Preparing And Maintaining The Procedure Book

One of the most valuable tools for an effective PTA/PTSA is a procedure book. If you did not receive one from the chair or officer who previously held your position, START one, and pass it on to your successor. We cannot expect someone new to fulfill his/her duties without some guidelines. The work of your association will continue in a more efficient manner if continuity is provided in your PTA/PTSA.

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What is a Procedure Book?

The procedure book does not need to be elaborate. A loose-leaf binder notebook makes a serviceable and convenient cover to which pages can be easily added or removed, when the material becomes obsolete. A procedure book should be used for at least three years, and then a new one should be started. Remember that a procedure book is the property of the association, not the person who has previously, or who is currently using it.

Contents of a Procedure Book

- Name, address, telephone number, and period served
- Your plan of work and calendar
- All information from the State and National PTA that pertains to your job
- Directory of all PTA board members, your committee, State and National counterparts, and other contacts
- Association bylaws, current budget, standing rules, newsletters, minutes, and bulletins
- All correspondence pertaining to your position
- Copy of any reports given to the local association
- Notes from workshops, conferences, and conventions that you have attended
- Pages or sections of the State Handbook, or policies that are pertinent to your responsibilities
- At the end of your PTA fiscal year, you may wish to reduce the bulk of the procedure book, but until that time, keep everything in order and together.
- Any other resource materials you have found to be helpful
- Evaluation of the year's work with specific suggestions and recommendations for improvement or future goals.

Because many new committee chairs have little or no experience in the position, they need a procedure book to identify the work, continuity, and procedure of a chairmanship to better plan and work in an effective manner.

New Jersey PTA Office

The state office is your source for:

- Request additional information on any matters of PTA concern
- Membership supplies and PTA merchandise.
- PTA publications, mailings, and leadership materials.
- Awards (Honorary Life Membership, Meritorious Award, Membership Growth Awards, and Achievement Awards).

- State and federal government forms required for nonprofit organizations and instructions for their use.
- Information about New Jersey PTA's group exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code
- Registration and arrangements for statewide workshops and conferences.
- Conference and workshop materials, leadership packets, convention materials, Legislative materials, and other printed material of the association.
- Place to send all Officer Forms, changes of contact information for officers, membership reports, membership dues, audit form, etc.
- Send contributions, Founder's Day Gifts, and donations.
- Order additional membership cards.
- And much more...

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