



Ten Ways to Recruit More PTA Members

(1) ASSEMBLE A CREATIVE MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH TEAM

Put together an outreach team that will be responsible for identifying potential new members in your community. While the entire PTA should be ready and willing to ask others to join PTA, let your outreach team guide the way.

Ask a PTA board member, a teacher, and one male and one female PTA member to join your membership chair to become the outreach team. Ask that team to identify one or two main sources of new members, and to help your unit reach out to that group. Will it be dads this year? Teachers? Or how about high school seniors, who make great volunteers as well as members?

As you build your outreach team, search for people who have experience in marketing, advertising, public relations, sales, extension, or strategic planning. With such people on board, you will be able to draw on a wide variety of talents and develop a strong recruitment plan.

(2) DEVELOP A NETWORK

Think about your community as a recruitment network. Develop a list of local businesses and organizations you do business with or interact with on a regular basis. Contact them to talk about ways your PTA could partner with them.

Create a “business member” category in your bylaws: A business can pay a special dues rate to become a member of your PTA. Allow the business member to choose one person to represent the business and vote in your PTA. In addition, allow the business member to place in the business’ window a decal or banner that says “Proud Supporter of _____ PTA.”

Ask business members to provide a speaker for a meeting or to host or sponsor an event. A representative from a local bank could give a seminar on saving for college. The local police department could talk about Internet safety.

Display PTA member sign-up sheets at local businesses to increase your outreach in the community. Ask the local grocery store to print a message about joining PTA on the cash register receipt.

(3) SEEK OPPORTUNITIES FOR PTA MEMBERS TO SPEAK AT COMMUNITY EVENTS

Visibility is an important part of membership recruitment. Be aggressive in identifying opportunities for PTA members to speak at community events. Remember that within your PTA you have a wealth of resources: people who can speak about parent involvement, children’s health and wellness, how to run an effective meeting, and more.

Gather a group of members who love to present workshops or training sessions. Host a “picnic in the park” series over the lunch hour during the summer and highlight topics of interest to the community. Develop sessions on such topics as grassroots advocacy, effective involvement in the school, and finding quality after-school care.

Encourage members to join the local Toastmasters group. As members work on improving their public speaking skills, they can also network and promote involvement in PTA.

(4) PROMOTE YOUR PTA

Don't be afraid to "sell" your PTA and ask everyone in the community to join.

Create a flier that tells potential members three things your PTA accomplished last year, three things your PTA hopes to accomplish this year, and three ways PTA helps your community and its children. Put the flier out at all school events, ask local businesses to post the flier in their stores, have the local supermarket stuff the flier into shoppers' bags, and ask the library to place one in each borrowed book.

As part of your membership drive, ask the school to place a TV/VCR in the school lobby and run the PTA public service announcements in a loop (continuously) during student drop-off and pickup and Back-to-School events.

Don't forget new students! New students join your school throughout the school year. Do you have a way for their parents to join PTA? Consider creating a "welcome to the neighborhood" package that includes a map of the area (identifying nearby libraries, stores, museums, and other areas of interest) and information about joining PTA. Add a volunteer interest survey and a list of upcoming activities to encourage parents to be involved.

(5) WORK WITH THE MEDIA

Another method of informing a wide audience about your PTA's activities is submitting news releases to newspapers, radio and television stations, and other media that serve your community. Publicize your major events, and always invite people to join you for your next meeting. Provide your Web address or other contact information so that potential members can contact you. Remember that newspaper advertisements, messages in church or community bulletins, and letters to the editor can also help create interest in your PTA.

Call your local paper and get the name of the individual who reports on school happenings and/or educational issues. Invite that reporter to your events and send him or her a press release prior to any event that involves performers, assemblies, and children.

If your school or community has a local cable access channel, ask the cable distributor to run your PTA's public service announcement. Contact the local cable company to find out how to run the announcement.

(6) USE PERSONAL CONTACTS

Look around at your friends, family members, neighbors, and coworkers, as well as the members of other organizations in which you are involved. These are all potential partners in PTA work.

Ask your PTA board members to create a list of community and organization leaders they know. Invite these leaders to a PTA event, such as an assembly, an ice cream social, or a field day, and show them what value your PTA provides to the school and community. Reaching out to these contacts could garner new members, or even lead to the development of joint projects.

Ask your spouse, a parent, or another important person in your life to join PTA. PTA is your passion; don't be afraid to share that with others who are close to you. Anyone who is concerned with the well-being of children should join and be active in your PTA.

(7) TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PTA RESOURCES

Customizable posters, brochures, letters, fliers, and advertisements are available online at www.pta.org/marketing. Local unit presidents and membership chairs can use these resources to enhance membership recruitment and retention.

Let your voice be heard on the PTA Bulletin Boards at www.pta.org/bb. Share ideas about improving student achievement, keeping kids safe and healthy, and managing media and technology use.

Share your success stories with other PTA members, or read about their successful events. The PTA Great Idea Bank connects you to members across the nation. Visit www.pta.org/local_leader/idea to search for and share innovative ideas for promoting parent involvement.

(8) ENLIST THE HELP OF A LOCAL CELEBRITY

Find a famous person in your town—every community has one—and ask him or her to be a spokesperson for your PTA. Ask him or her to serve as an Ambassador for Youth, to speak on behalf of your unit and encourage parents to get involved.

Ask the local television sports anchor or radio personality to represent your PTA. In addition to emceeding an event or serving as auctioneer at your next dessert auction, he or she can promote involvement with your PTA while doing his or her job.

Ask the mayor to officially declare September as PTA Membership Month or to designate an official PTA Week in your city or town. Partnering with the local government not only increases your visibility but also increases your credibility and shows your willingness to be involved in the community.

(9) INCREASE ACTIVITIES, NOT MEETINGS

Remember that less is more—at least when it comes to meetings! Increase participation by having *fewer* meetings and *more* events. Meetings to vote and discuss business are necessary, but keep those short and to the point. Hold meetings when actual business decisions need to be made, and let members know in advance what you will be voting on.

Make your next meeting an event by inviting a guest speaker to talk about a topic important to parents. Host a family event such as a movie night or game night. Organize a panel discussion on topics that are “hot” in the district; if possible, include children in the discussion.

Set a time limit of 15 or 20 minutes for meetings. Make sure people have information prior to the meeting so that when decisions need to be made, it won't take up as much time. Use any additional time for a social event, fundraiser, or activity with children.

(10) JUST ASK!

Once people have expressed an interest in PTA, contact them right away so you can give them more information, find out about their interests, and invite them to participate. Make it personal; phone calls and personal visits will result in more members for your PTA.

Most importantly, just ask! A recent survey showed that the number one reason people don't join PTA is that they were never asked to join. Think about the great work you would be able to achieve if everyone in your PTA asked just one additional person to join.

