

PTA Standards Discussion

PTA Standard #1 – Welcoming All Families Into the School Community

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class

Goal 1: Create a welcoming climate

Goal 2: Build a respectful, inclusive school community

Discussion

Successes: welcome wagon; family relations committee; “contract” sent suggesting minimum 3 hour volunteer commitment of each family/year; personal verbal invitation to a non-volunteering parent to sign up for a committee; make tasks available that don’t require a command of the English language; always start council meeting with welcome/introduction period whenever there is a new face.

Group discussed the need for the council board members to each personally seek out and invite a non-attending parent to future meetings. Group also agreed that efforts should be made to be interactive with non-familiar faces at council meetings in case they are feeling intimidated or excluded.

Suggestions: Provide food/drink at meetings; district council could provide an evening training for incoming Presidents on running effective meetings/handling common pitfalls and challenges.

PTA Standard #2 – Communicating Effectively

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning

Goal 1: Sharing information between school and families

Discussion

Pinecrest parents would like to see their website be a better communication tool
Marble parents still feel inundated and overwhelmed by the number of emails they get each week.

Group wondered about the ability to gather feedback via exit surveys as families left buildings, or left the district, or graduated from the system (grade 12)

Next step:

The Black Parent Union has compiled a survey that covers standards #1 and #2. Darryl Pettway plans to provide that survey through the AlertNow system shortly. Group discussed how that survey could actually be a tool used by many committees and sub-groups provided that it is a strong cross-section of all district parents.

In the meantime, DPC reps will bring standards #3 and #4 to their February meetings and share thoughts at the March DPC meeting. DPC reps should read the background and suggestions prior to this meeting.

PTA Standard #3 – Supporting Student Success

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Goal 1: Sharing Information About Student Progress

Are families kept fully informed of how their children are doing in school, as well as how the entire school is progressing?

Goal 2: Supporting Learning by Engaging Families

Do families have opportunities to learn how to be active participants in their children's learning at home and at school?

Discussion:

Parents have expressed a need for constructive conversation during their brief parent-teacher conference. Group agreed that parents would benefit from a "Suggested Questions" sheet appropriate for their child's age level.

There also is a need for parents to understand and interpret their child's MEAP scores, especially if they are inconsistent with classroom performance.

Suggestions: Parent councils could provide parent-teacher conference prep support, either individually by school or district -level. Parent councils could be a forum for "MEAP analysis", again either individually or on a district-wide level for those grades. (ie – K-5 MEAP Interpretation Evening for the District).

PTA Standard #4 – Speaking Up For Every Child

Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Goal 1: Understanding How the System Works

Do parents know how the school and district operate, and how to raise questions or concerns about school or district programs and policies?

Goal 2: Empowering Families to Support Their Own and Other Children's Success in School

Are parents equipped and prepared to monitor student's progress and guide them toward their goals of post-graduation activity (college/career)?

Discussion:

New elementary families need more individual support in preparing for their child's first day. Simple things have been confusing for the new family such as bus routes, drop off procedures, etc.

Families at all grade levels need a channel for expressing frustration for programmatic challenges (ie – higher performing students aren't being challenged)

Parent council leaders have expressed a desire for training on “best accepted practices” in running a meeting and establishing agenda content.

Suggestions: Offer this specific individual support through welcome wagon or hold a parent orientation during the Kindergarten playground day. Ensure that the principal is present at council meetings where these frustration issues are being discussed; involve the principal in establishing the appropriate vehicle to discuss and resolve issue. Consider holding a district-wide council leadership training session over the summer.

PTA Standard #5 – Sharing Power

Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices and programs.

Goal 1: Strengthening the Family's Voice in Shared Decision Making

Are families full partners in making decisions on issues affecting their children, both at school and within the local community?

Factors to consider

- do families sit at the table or have a vote when decisions that touch their children are being made?
- what governance structures exist to discuss and weigh issues of equity, such as which children are eligible for a certain program?
- how do the school council and/or parent group develop and support new leaders among parents?

Goal 2: Building Families' Social and Political Connections

Does your school have a strong broad-based parent organization that offers families and school staff regular opportunities to network and discuss concerns with each other and with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders?

Factors to consider:

- in what ways does the school and parent group connect families to local officials?
- how do school and parent leaders make sure the parent organization truly represents all families in both its membership and its leadership?

PTA Standard #6 – Collaborating with Community

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Goal 1: Connecting the School with Community Resources

Do parents and school leaders work closely with neighborhood associations, government agencies, businesses and institutions of higher education to strengthen the school?

Factors to consider:

- what links to community resources has the school forged?
- have parents and families been part of that process?
- what plans exist to turn the school into a hub of community life?
- how do existing partnerships with community groups strengthen families and support student success?