

What Does the *PTA*[®] Do?

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Sixth District PTA

"serving the children of Santa Clara County"

*Carnivals, bake sales, Robert's Rules of Order, and meetings in the Teachers' Lounge. Is **that** what the PTA is all about? Well, yes -- that and much, much more: bringing communities together, improving children's health and safety, educating parents, bringing the arts back into our schools, improving education, helping parents like you help their kids, building our strength as advocates, working for laws that will help all our kids.*

*For 116 years -- since 1897 -- the PTA's core mission has been **advocating on behalf of children and youth**: working to improve their lives and circumstances today and their prospects tomorrow. Today's PTA is the nation's largest volunteer child advocacy organization.*

Local PTAs are typically organized around school communities, but the PTA isn't just "about" schools: it's about children and youth and families. The PTA's first major efforts led to child labor laws (moving kids from factories to schoolrooms) and to improvements in children's health care. For a bit more history, please visit <http://capta6.org/century>.

*There is real strength in numbers, and we encourage everyone who cares about children and youth to join. You don't have to have a child in school to be a member. You don't have to have a child at all. You just have to care about kids. You can **be** a child and be a full member. You aren't limited to one member in a family -- Mom, Dad, kids, aunts, uncles, grandparents, out-of-town relatives, friends, neighbors, etc., are all welcome.*

Volunteers are welcome -- and so are members who can't volunteer, or who choose to be supportive and to add their voices just by joining as members.

So please read on, and learn a bit more about the breadth and depth of PTA's commitment to children.

Thank you for caring!



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opportunities for parent **education**

talks and workshops	training & convention	online resources
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PTAs, school districts, the SCCOE (Santa Clara County Office of Education), and many nonprofits want to help you help your child.

PTAs all over the county offer **talks and workshops** on health and safety, learning, special education, parenting, and other topics. Most are **FREE**; many are open to everyone. Did you know that the SCCOE presents over 200 **FREE** workshops each school year? Colleges & universities, hospitals & clinics, foundations, churches, and other agencies and nonprofits all over the county also offer great talks and workshops (some **FREE**).

PTA Leadership Training: To support the work of PTA officers and chairpersons, Sixth District PTA offers countywide Spring and Fall Leadership Training Days, and Santa Clara Valley PTA offers additional smaller training events and Q&A sessions throughout the year. Several of our PTA Councils also offer Training Days. Don't go through the year without help. Just ask!

For the biggest and best PTA Training experience, and much more, attend a **PTA Convention**. The State PTA Convention usually alternates between Northern and Southern California. The next one will be held in Los Angeles, Wed-Sat May 7-10, 2014.

Many talks and workshops, and lots of other resources, are **available online** at <http://capta6.org>.



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opportunities for parent **involvement**

with your own child	as a PTA volunteer	by adding your voice!
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Your biggest and most important opportunity: **get involved & be engaged with your own children's education**. When your kids are small, read to them. As they grow, read **with** them. Give them opportunities to express themselves verbally and artistically. Discuss their projects, schoolwork, homework, and *ideas* with them (not just their grades). "What did you learn today?" is a much better question than "How did you do on the test?" Don't be shy. You don't have to be an expert in math, science, or history. You just have to be interested in what your kids are doing!

Have a little time to spare? Then **get involved as a PTA volunteer** -- there are lots of "jobs" large and small; during school hours and outside school hours; ongoing, short-term, and one-shot. Pick something that will be fun and interesting for you, not something you'll find burdensome.

No time for volunteer work? That's OK. You are **always** welcome in the PTA. Simply joining -- even if you don't have time to volunteer -- has real value: you add your voice to PTA's advocacy on behalf of every child. That's not a small thing. It's very important. **Thank you for joining the PTA!**

Teachers, administrators, and your friends, neighbors, and relatives are also welcome in the PTA. They don't have to have a child in school, and they don't have to live in your community; they just have to care about the needs and the prospects of children. Kids can be members, too! Whether your PTA is called a "PTSA" or not, **students are always welcome as full voting members**. They just have to be old enough (typically grade 4 or 5) to understand what the PTA is about.



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support for children's health

physical health	social & emotional health	substance abuse
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Health issues impact a child's entire life, including his or her ability to focus, to study, and to learn. (Imagine trying to study with a toothache.)

Beginning with prenatal care and "well-baby care," parents should make sure that their children have routine medical and dental checkups so that problems are averted, or discovered and treated as early as possible. Check for vision and hearing problems. (It's hard to learn if you can't hear the teacher, or if you can't see the board.)

Many PTAs act in supporting roles, through activities such as lice checks.

PTAs and other organizations offer parent education, especially in areas of social/emotional health such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and bullying.

Excellent talks, workshops, and online information about health topics are also available from agencies such as the Santa Clara County Office of Education and the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health, as well as hospitals (e.g., Lucile Packard Children's Hospital) and other nonprofits (e.g., Children's Health Council and Parents Helping Parents).



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support for child safety

traffic & bike safety	gun safety	internet safety
risky behaviors	bullying	gang involvement
and don't forget	summer safety issues: swimming pools, etc.	

Our first and most important job as parents is to keep our children safe and secure -- at home, at school, in between, and on vacation.

The issues change as children grow. For small children, it's about chasing a ball into the street, or holding hands while crossing. For older kids, it's about bicycle safety. For teens, it's about cars -- about safe driving, about drinking and driving (don't!), about cell phones in cars (keep them in the glove box!), and about when you should think twice before getting into someone else's car. It's also about substance abuse and, more generally, about risky behaviors. And for all of us as parents, it's about keeping kids of any age from having access to firearms.

PTA and its Allied Agencies (Safe Routes to School, Common Sense Media, Child Safety Network, and more) provide advice, tips, and reminders about important safety issues; they also advocate for school, city, and state programs to protect children from harm.



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PTA supports **the arts!**



PTA believes the arts are essential for a creative, engaged, work-prepared and civic-minded student population. The arts are a critical link to learning success.

PTA supports the arts for *all* students. That means diving in and making things, or performing, or writing -- it's all about **creative expression**, not just looking at or listening to someone else's work.

For years, PTA has fought hard for funding for arts education. We achieved significant success early in the Schwarzenegger administration, but the budget cuts of recent years have undermined those efforts. Some school districts have maintained arts programs; others have had difficulty doing so.

The PTA and the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) are working to provide other avenues to arts education:

- (1) California State PTA's **SMARTS** program:
<http://www.capta.org/sections/programs-smarts/>
- (2) National PTA's **REFLECTIONS** program:
<http://capta6.org/reflections/>
- (3) The SCCOE's **Artspiration** initiative and the Parent Arts Network:
<http://artspiration.sccoe.org/>



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PTA focuses on **learning!**

English learners

opportunity gaps

special needs

For over 100 years, PTA has worked to support our children's schools, their teachers, and other school and district staff who work to educate our children. PTA's focus has traditionally been on K-12, but has more recently expanded in both directions, to include Early Childhood Education, preparation for college and career, and college itself.

PTA supports a rich, well-rounded curriculum for all students -- not just reading, writing, and arithmetic, and not just textbooks, rote learning, and bubble tests. **All** children deserve literature, history, the arts, hands-on math and science, project-based learning, physical education, sports opportunities, and more.

Sixth District PTA has recently hosted two major programs about the **opportunity gaps** that underlie the widely lamented **achievement gaps**. The PTA believes that equity in education, starting with equity and adequacy in funding, will go a long way toward higher achievement for all students.

The PTA and other nonprofits advocate, and offer parent education, in many other areas, including:

- English Learners
- Dual Immersion
- Special Education
- Common Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments
- The 30-Million Word Gap (early exposure to spoken language)
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math)
- Impediments to learning (health; vision & hearing; ADD/ADHD; dyslexia; anxiety/depression; fears and worries)
- GATE (Gifted and Talented Education)
- Transitional Kindergarten
- Summer Learning Loss
- Civic Mission of Schools



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helping you advocate for **your** child

in your classroom	in your school	in your community
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Advocacy begins at home, with your advocacy for your own child.

Advocating for your child's education begins with talking with your child -- not lecturing, but showing through what you say and do that you value learning, that you value the arts, and that you're excited about what they're doing.

As Woody Allen famously said, "90% of life is just showing up." Advocating for your child at school begins with being an active parent: coming to parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, parent nights, and other school events, especially those offered by the school or school district and by your PTA. Talk with your child's teacher, in person or by phone or e-mail, about how your child is doing, and about what you can do to help.

If your child has special needs, you will talk with your school administration about an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for your child.

In high school, talk with your child's advisers and counselors (including college counselors).

Even more important, talk with your child -- help him or her gather and analyze information for projects and (in high school) for college preparation and college applications. Help your child *manage* information, projects, and time. Discuss course choices, college options, and career paths. Don't just assume that everything will happen by itself or by magic!



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advocating for **every** child

in school districts	in Sacramento	in Washington
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PTA isn't just carnivals and fundraising! It has a long, proud history of advocacy and service for children and families, dating back to 1897. A core PTA goal is **to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.**

In 1897, PTA worked to get children out of factories and into schools (**child labor laws**). PTA has worked on legislation leading to **hot lunch programs, school nurses, foster care laws, Kindergarten, and mandatory immunizations.** A resolution at a California State PTA Convention led to **helmet laws.** In recent years, PTAs have worked hard to raise money to support schools and maintain essential programs, but that was not our original mission.

The PTA is often political, but never partisan. PTA takes positions on pending legislation, ballot measures, and school district policies. (It never supports or opposes candidates for office.) In the past year, State PTA **analyzed 5,000 bills** in the state legislature, and **testified on 1,000** of them.

This past year, we've created a Sixth District Advocacy Team, with PTA leaders from all over the county, to work on countywide and statewide issues. Many things are in flux right now: school funding, Common Core State Standards, Smarter Balanced Assessments, and more. Watch for info at <http://capta6.org>!



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working with your school board

individually	on committees	at Board Meetings
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Public schools have always been a community resource and a community project (not just a project put together and financed by parents of current students). That's why your entire community (all the voters in your school district) elects a Board of Trustees to supervise the schools. Depending on where you live, you may have a Unified (K-12) school district, or separate Elementary (K-8) and High School districts.

The school board doesn't run the district or the schools. It sets policy, oversees financial plans, and hires and evaluates the Superintendent who in turn is in charge of day-to-day operations.

School board meetings are open and public. Some PTAs (especially PTA Councils) have one or more **School Board Observers** who attend meetings. PTA officers will sometimes address the board on behalf of the PTA itself.

Your school board works for you, and you can also work with them. You can attend meetings. (You may also be able to watch meetings on cable TV or online.) You can speak to the board, in public, about any item on their agenda. (You will usually be limited to 2 or 3 minutes.) You can also speak, during Open Forum, about a topic that is *not* on the agenda. You can write (by mail or e-mail) to one or more members. You can also become more involved, by volunteering for a school district committee (e.g., for textbook selection). You can even run for school board yourself.



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working with your legislators

District Offices	Legislative Round Table	Legislation Conference
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Each of us is represented in Sacramento by one Assemblymember and one State Senator. Each of our legislators has a Sacramento office in the Capitol Building, and a District Office in or near our county.

Your legislators and their staffers welcome you to attend their events (hearings, town halls, open houses, etc.), to communicate with them individually, and to meet with them or their staffers at their offices to discuss your issues, concerns, suggestions, and questions. (You can also attend events that are offered by other legislators; but for individual communications, they will usually refer you to your own legislators.)

Sixth District PTA works with the six Assemblymembers, the four State Senators, and the three Congressional Representatives who represent portions of our county. Each year, in November, Sixth District PTA holds a **Legislative Round Table**: we invite all of our legislators, and all PTA members, to come and join an interesting and wide-ranging conversation about issues affecting our kids! Watch for an announcement!

State PTA works directly with all 80 Assemblymembers and all 40 State Senators. Each year, in the Winter, State PTA holds a two-day **Legislation Conference** in Sacramento. This is a great opportunity to learn about budget and policy issues, to visit legislative offices in the Capitol, and to network with PTA colleagues from all over California.

Sixth District PTA is the countywide PTA organization that supports the work of approximately 200 PTA Units associated with public schools in Santa Clara County, California. We are one of 29 PTA Districts within the California State PTA. Most of our Units are organized into eight PTA Councils -- Cupertino-Fremont-Sunnyvale, Evergreen, Los Altos-Mountain View, Milpitas Unified, North Valley, Palo Alto, San Jose Unified, and Santa Clara Unified.

Our other Units are in Alum Rock Union Elementary, Campbell Union, Campbell Union High, East Side Union High, Franklin-McKinley Elementary, Lakeside Joint Elementary, Oak Grove Elementary, and Saratoga Union School Districts.

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