



Gaining and Retaining Membership

WHEN YOU ASK PEOPLE TO JOIN, ASK LIKE YOU MEAN IT!

Three reasons why membership is so important at every level of PTA:

- Strengthens our power to advocate at the local level and upwards—numbers matter!
- Provides more manpower at the unit level to do good things for our students and teachers.
- Brings new ideas and concerns to light at the unit level so that your PTA can do more and better.

Three best messages to recruit and retain members:

- Support your child's school.
- Membership is completely separate from volunteering.
- Member Perks are tangible benefits to joining

Items to have at the membership table:

- The current list of Member Perks.
- A prominent list of what your PTA has done and is doing for the students and the school. Toot your PTA's horn long and loud!
- Plenty of membership envelopes or flyers.
- Pre-printed membership cards to hand out.
- Any vouchers or freebies to give away with memberships.
- Cash box, income verification form, envelopes, pens.
- A banner, poster, tablecloth to make your table attractive.
- A splashy visual to illustrate your goal and progress.

General advice:

- Be welcoming at every PTA meeting: Greet newcomers and make them welcome, then find out if they are PTA members.
- Unbundle membership from volunteering—volunteering isn't a requirement for membership. Don't propose on the first date!
- Be present at every PTA-sponsored event to recruit members. Ask if you can have a table at non-PTA events as well.
- Plan out your year-long membership campaign—be ready to tweak it!
- Take advantage of the graphics, customizable marketing tools and suggestions on the CAPTA.org website.
- Promote Member Perks. Remind everyone that there are scholarships for parent volunteers, nurses and students who are PTA members.
- Make your association report lively. Share last year's totals and this year's goal; report out on your progress. Have membership envelopes and cards ready at the meeting for new members.

- Carry membership envelopes and cards with you at all times.
- Be polite but persistent. Many people need to be asked several times.
- Promote what your PTA does for the school and students. Have a list at your membership table, including how much each event costs and how many volunteer hours it took to put on! Include pictures.
- Remind potential members that joining a PTA gives them decision/voting rights at that school site's PTA. That's why parents should join the PTA for each school at which they have students.

Food for Thought—Issues That Affect Membership:

- Does your board reflect the make-up of the student body?
- Do the same people keep being elected to the board over and over again?
- Are there cliques which make people feel excluded?
- Are your dues cost-prohibitive? Are your events cost-prohibitive?
- Are your events and programs suitable for your population?
- Are you using all the social media tools that your parents use?
- Are language and cultural barriers excluding people?

Who to ask:

- Ask the teachers to join. Have membership forms at your welcome event for them. Is there an incentive your PTA can offer to teachers who join? .
- Ask your school's administrators and staff—your principal is a part of your executive board and must be a member! Remind the school nurse that there are scholarships available for nurses who are PTA members.
- Ask the students, especially if your unit is a PTSA—High School students should be encouraged because there are scholarships for seniors who are PTA members.
- Ask students to ask their parents—those classroom challenges can be very helpful in motivating students, but make sure you aren't exclusionary (100% return of envelopes regardless of what is inside). At high schools, recruit ASB or other activist student groups to help you tailor your message to the students.
- Ask volunteers at your events—chances are some of them aren't yet members.
- Ask both parents to join, not just one or the other.
- Ask students new to the district: Put information about your PTA (a meeting calendar, your brochure if you have one, a newsletter), the list of Member Perks and a membership envelope in the packets available at each school for families new to the district.
- Ask your PTA alumni to join each year even if their students have graduated.
- Ask your former PTA board members, past HSA honorees.
- Ask your council membership person to solicit community memberships. With one flyer, council can offer memberships to one, some or all of the units; memberships are then distributed to each unit.
- Ask men to join—all those dads, uncles, grandpas who help out behind the scenes but aren't actually members. Go to the National PTA website (<http://www.pta.org/more>) to find out about MORE (Men Organized to Raise Engagement) for lots of ideas. You don't have to make everything sports-related to attract men, just use gender-neutral language and themes!
- Ask parents at the Transitional Kinder/Kinder orientations put on by your school district—promote PTA and memberships too.

A few ideas to help promote membership:

- Ask the office staff to wear a PTA tee-shirt one day a week to promote PTA membership; make sure they have plenty of envelopes and a collection box.
- Ask the teachers to promote PTA to their students and parent volunteers in the classroom—is there an incentive to offer or a visual that will appeal? Members around the world—which classroom can produce the most members from somewhere out of state or out of the country, which classroom can contribute one at the greatest distance?
- Check out Spotlight Award ideas for Membership/Outreach—don't re-invent the wheel!
- Work with your event chairmen to see if you can offer member perks—for example, a discount on popcorn at Movie Night, vouchers at the PTA store.
- Talk with your president and treasurer about the possibility of providing electronic options for paying membership; put a link on your PTA website to make it easy for out-of-state joiners.
- Have an International Night featuring food and the cultures of the families at your school. Be sure to have that membership table in a prominent position.
- Host family friendly events at no charge (Boo-Hoo Breakfast at the start of the school year, Books & Blankets night with cozy reading opportunities; Pancake Breakfast or Ice Cream Social free with proof of membership (with an opportunity to join at the door) and speak briefly about the benefits of membership.
- Make a silly trophy to promote a membership contest amongst your high schools, middle schools or even the elementary schools.
- Use coupons for office supply stores to get free or almost free items, then offer them as incentives.
- Brag tags for students who join.
- Brag tag on teachers' mail cubbies for those who have joined.