

# PTA vs. Unaffiliated Parent Groups

## What Makes the “PTA Difference” So Much Better for Schools?

### The Power of PTA: PTA Makes a Difference

Over the past 120 years, PTA has helped solve some of the biggest issues facing America’s children. Many of the structures all children benefit from today—child labor laws, universal kindergarten, the National School Lunch Program and the juvenile justice system—were accomplished as a result of PTA members’ advocacy.

And it’s not just at the national level. Our state and local PTAs change lives too. Florida PTA members helped to defeat a piece of state legislation that would allow for-profit management companies and other corporate interests to take over public schools, keeping children’s educations from effectively being bought and sold. Washington State PTA worked to secure the passage of several major state education reforms, improving the day-to-day lives of children across the state. The impact of PTA is felt far and wide across our country.

*“An unaffiliated parent group is at one school and it only cares about those kids, period. From the beginning, PTA was for all children. I joined PTA because I believe that when I am helping somebody else’s kids, I’m helping my kids too.”*

—**Maria Kenner**, PTA member, Demossville, Ky.



### The PTA Difference

PTA—Founded in 1897, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is a nationwide network of 4 million families, students, educators and community leaders working at the school building, district, state and national levels to improve education, health and safety conditions for our children. National PTA’s mission is to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

### Unaffiliated Parent Groups

These groups are comprised of families focused exclusively on issues at their school and are not part of a larger organized network, so have no way to impact decisions beyond their own schoolyard.

We commend all of the caring adults who join a parent group to support student learning and develop positive partnerships with their school’s officials. PTA believes, however, that the issues that affect our children today extend beyond their individual schools.

As parents, we have a universal desire to make sure our children are healthy and safe. We want to give them the tools and resources they need to grow, learn and thrive. We want them to reach their full potential. That common desire is what gives the Parent Teacher Association its power.

We have been an ardent advocate for bettering the lives of every child because we know we cannot only focus on our own children. We must care for other people’s kids, because the lives of our own children—or grandchildren—will be affected by contact with those other kids. If someday your son needs a critical operation, someone else’s child will be the surgeon. If someday your daughter is the victim of a violent crime, someone else’s child will be the judge.

This is why we work to advocate for every child. When you help one child, you are helping all children in the school community and potentially the nation.



## Valuable Resources

Administrative factors also set PTA apart from other parent groups. PTA offers a national and state infrastructure, with staff and trained volunteer leaders available to assist PTAs in securing nonprofit status, filing government paperwork, creating bylaws, purchasing low-cost insurance and training leaders. These support services are included in PTA membership at no additional cost.

PTA schools have access to experts, resources, trainings and dozens of programs and initiatives to encourage arts education, healthy lifestyles and family reading.

Over the years we've had a PTA in Georgia sponsor vision clinics for low-income students. And in Detroit, Mich., a PTA runs after-school programs that keep kids off the streets. In California, a PTA created a buddy system between families with limited English proficiency and other bilingual families.

When a school has a PTA, parents are better informed and more engaged, and the learning environment is more supportive for students—plus, the school has a better reputation in its community.

## Three key benefits of being part of the PTA community



### Information

PTA offers email newsletters that keep members up-to-date on the latest grant offers, program updates and advocacy alerts. PTA members know and are prepared for what's happening in education around the country.



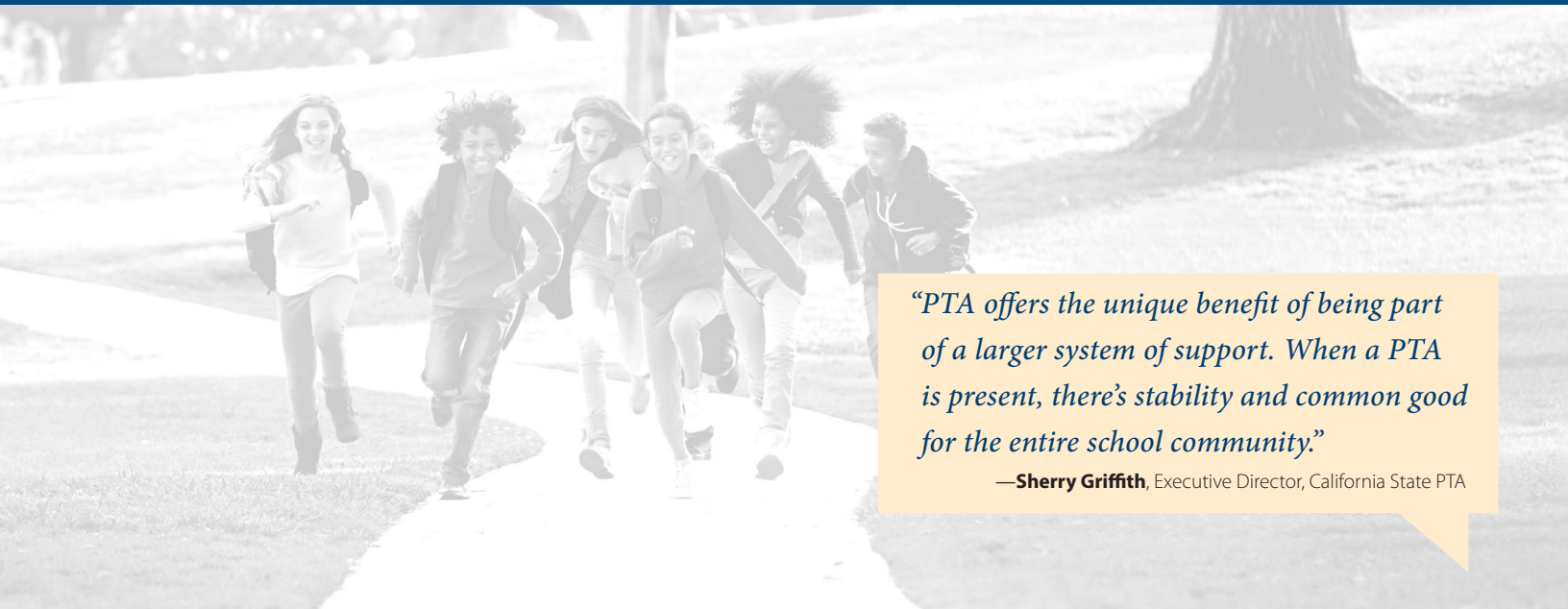
### Guidance to Run Your PTA

Running any parent group can be challenging and sometimes overwhelming. Only PTA offers a Back-to-School Kit and an e-learning webinar library to help PTA leaders become trained and prepared to serve their communities and manage local PTA units. Unaffiliated parent groups do not have this vast set of guides, sample templates and tips to use in their school.



### Networking

Need help figuring out a problem at your child's school or want to spread a great idea around? You'll be able to interact with like-minded parents at district, state and national PTA functions.



*“PTA offers the unique benefit of being part of a larger system of support. When a PTA is present, there's stability and common good for the entire school community.”*

—**Sherry Griffith**, Executive Director, California State PTA

## Why PTA Matters

It's important to know that many of the decisions that impact children's education are not made by educators at their schools. These decisions frequently come from district, state or federal officials. According to the 2012 U.S. census, there are 114,991,725 households in the United States, but only 33,763,140 contain children of school age (age 3-18). This means that less than 30% of U.S. households have children in school—and over 70% do not.

So, when issues affecting children and schools are discussed, families with children need to join forces with teachers and school administrators to be heard, because there is a good chance that the people making the decisions (politicians, school board members, community leaders, etc.) do not live with children. PTA has the ability

to use our collective voice to share real-life experiences about what it is like to raise a family today—or go to school—with the critical decision-makers who may not have that perspective. If they don't live with or know about today's challenges, how can they clearly see tomorrow's solutions?

PTA gives parents a united and powerful voice, a seat at the decision-making table and the tools to influence change that will better the lives of all children.

Unaffiliated parent groups by design do not have this type of influence on their community, region, state or at the federal level. The ability to speak for every child with one voice is the Power of PTA.

## Hidden Risks: The Liabilities of Unaffiliated Parent Groups

PTA is a household name that is part of the fabric of America. Our name is widely recognized—93% of people surveyed name PTA first over any other child advocacy group. Our brand helps PTA establish rapport with parents, educators, school boards, businesses, as well as local, state and national policymakers. So when challenges and issues arise, a PTA has much more support and influence than an unaffiliated parent group.

Unaffiliated groups do not have the guidance and support that local PTAs have from their state and National PTA. Most unaffiliated parent groups have little or no help with bylaws, sound financial management, leadership training, nonprofit status, parliamentary procedures, risk management, etc. This lack of knowledge creates a greater possibility of liability for both the unaffiliated group and the school.

Unaffiliated groups are more likely to increase a school's liability and trigger lawsuits. According to Elgin Allen, owner of Association Insurance Management, "Among the unaffiliated groups we insure, 10% have embezzlement claims, as compared to 1% of PTAs." The biggest risk to the school are lawsuits involving bodily injury occurring at an unaffiliated group activity held on school property. Unlike unaffiliated groups, most PTAs have insurance and some put the school on their policy as an additional insured, which protects the school if a lawsuit arises from an activity held on school property.

It's also important to note that PTA dues support the work in your school community and help state PTAs and National PTA provide important research, policies, professional development tools and public relations support for PTAs when they encounter difficult situations or simply want to improve on how they run their PTA. This means that local PTAs can reach out to their state PTA and National PTA for guidance when they face unanticipated challenges that encumber their good intentions.

*"Among the unaffiliated parent groups we insure, 10% have embezzlement claims, as compared to 1% of PTAs."*

—Elgin Allen, Owner, Association Insurance Management

## Who PTA Serves

PTA is the oldest and largest child advocacy association in America, comprised of over 24,000 local PTAs and 4 million members. As part of this nationwide network, parents have a voice in decisions that impact children in their individual schools, and at the district, state and national levels.

16.5M

Students served in the U.S., District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Department of Defense Schools in Europe

55%

of PTAs serve Title I schools

59%

of students we serve are students of color

71%


of PTAs serve elementary schools

\$280K+

in grants awarded to PTAs/schools for program efforts

69%

of dues spent on programs for PTAs and families



Interested in joining PTA or starting a PTA in your school?  
It's easy to do! National PTA and your state PTA can help you.  
Go to **PTA.org/Join** for more info.

**National  
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