Family Engagement in a Virtual World

Fresh Ideas for PTA Leaders

Summer 2020
We’re in uncharted territory

Families are dealing with:

• Illness
• Financial hardship
• Food insecurity
• Mental health
• Deaths of family and friends
What are families saying?

• 81% worry kids **miss social interactions** (National Parents Union)

• ~9 in 10 worry **children are falling behind academically** (The Education Trust)

• 72% (80% of African American & Latinx parents) say it’s somewhat or very likely they’ll find **more time to talk** to their children about assignments (Learning Heroes)

• 67% **feel more connected** with their child’s day-to-day education (Learning Heroes)
About Tracie Potts

• National PTA Board of Directors
• Family Engagement Fellow
• Family Engagement Advisory Team co-chair
• Former PTA Council VP
• ES/MS PTA President
• MD & National PTA Lifetime Achievement Award
• Montgomery County Champion for Children
• Featured “Learning Hero”
Family Engagement Matters

- As important as a high quality principal or rigorous curriculum
- Helps struggling schools “beat the odds”

Source: Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago
Family or Parent: Any caring adult in a child’s life: grandparents, siblings, foster parents, mentors, etc.

Engagement: How PTAs strengthen family connections to their school and child’s education.
What is *Transformative* Family Engagement?

A shared effort of families, schools, and community leaders to advance programs, practices, and policies that empower every parent to make their child’s potential a reality.
Guiding Principles: The 4 I’s

INCLUSIVE
Embracing and valuing diverse perspectives.

INDIVIDUALIZED
Meeting the unique needs of every family and child.

INTEGRATED
Connecting and aligning with the educational system.

IMPACTFUL
Empowering families to support their child’s success.
Inclusive

Embracing and valuing diverse perspectives.
How can your PTA CONNECT families?

• Organize **neighborhood activities** like chalk-the-walk or bear hunt
• Post fun or informative **videos of teachers and staff**
• Promote virtual **spirit weeks** online
• Host virtual **family nights** - trivia, games, movies, talent show
• Offer **yoga or mindfulness workshops** for mental wellness
• Share student art in a **virtual art gallery** (Launch Reflections!)
• Create a **little free pantry** (for food donations/pick ups)
• Host a **device drive** to get gently used devices to students

Share your ideas in the comments!
VIRTUAL PEP RALLY!

- High energy!
- Keep it short
- Energize, inform, connect
- Build *Community*
- Music
- Open chat
- Use social media to promote
VIRTUAL PEP RALLY!

- PTA Welcome
- Chat Your Feelings Word Cloud
- Principal (1st day tips)
- Parade of teachers!
- 3 Live Questions
- Surprise Performance?
VIRTUAL PEP RALLY!

Before You Go
Share word cloud
Thanks
Next connect
Membership link
Feedback/Contact
Individualized

Meeting the unique needs of every family and child.
“Nudges” for virtual programming

Reference to teacher and other parents highlights social norm for attendance

Priming parent identity as a teacher

Envelope: Increases sense of importance

Reframed as an invitation, not a flyer

Personalized hand-written information, focuses attention

GRS: The GRS kickoff with John's teacher is on Thursday at 8:30am in Parent Room. Reply "Y" if you plan to come.

GRS: Glad that you said you can make it. Don’t forget to pick up your GRS gift bag!

Attributed to: Helena Duch, Columbia University & Lisa Gennetian, NYU
How can your PTA HELP families?

- **CHECK IN** with families you haven’t heard from
- **CONSIDER** a handwritten note or phone call
- **ASK** what they need
- **CONNECT** them to community resources
- **OFFER** webinars, video calls, conference calls & town halls to discuss distance learning, mental health, budgeting, COVID-19 updates

Share your ideas in the comments!
HELPING FAMILIES

Integrated

- Going beyond one-time events
- Putting the “T” in PTA
- Linking to learning

Integrated
Connecting and aligning with the educational system.
How can your PTA SUPPORT teachers?

- Review **virtual/hybrid learning plans** and **grade-level standards**
- Develop **online study groups**
- Offer **virtual story times** using books recommended by teachers or your school librarian
- Find parents who can assist with **online tutoring**

Share your ideas in the comments!
How can your PTA SUPPORT teachers?

• Think creatively about **virtual enrichment programming** (STEM Night, Art Night, Career Day, book club)
• Include families in **morning announcements** or as a **surprise reader**
• **Provide** supplies and manipulatives for learning at home
• Ask teachers how you can **be a resource** during this challenging time

Share your ideas in the comments!
MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

• Tutoring nights for younger students
• COVID College Prep expertise
• Financial literacy class
• Virtual social (planned by students!)
Impactful

Measuring success
Developing knowledge & skills
Opportunities to practice & interact

Impactful
Empowering families to support their child's success.
How can your PTA be IMPACTFUL?

- Walk families through online resources (reading/math sites)
- Show families how to use tools to support their kids
- Offer technology workshops where parents and children can practice remote learning skills (muting, sharing screens, backgrounds)
- Ask families for feedback about your programs

Share your ideas in the comments!
QUESTIONS?
SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

www.pta.org/home/programs/
National-PTA-School-of-Excellence