

PUBLICITY, PUBLIC RELATIONS & WEBSITES

PUBLISHING A PTA/ SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

A PTA/school newsletter is the *PRIMARY* source of communication with the school community. It may be the only contact some parents have with the school. It can be a great self-esteem builder for students who are recognized in it for their accomplishments or have artwork or stories printed in it, with a byline, of course.

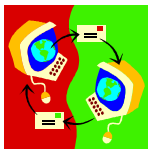


Include everything YOU would want to know. The contents will vary with the school and school level, but it should reflect YOUR school.

With the computer newsletter capabilities available to most schools, newsletters can certainly look professional. The important thing is to make sure it is easy to read.

- Keep articles concise with easy-to-understand language. Use simple eye-catching clip art, drawings or headlines.
- Be accurate.
- Don't print rumors, just the facts.
- Don't editorialize, just the facts.
- Do you have people in your school community who do not speak English? Include special, important information in the newsletter in their language.

To mail or e-mail — at the elementary level, newsletters may be sent home with students. At the middle and high school level, newsletters must be mailed or e-mailed if they are to get to the parents. Check with the post office regarding bulk mailing. Some schools may have their own permit number.



It is important that PTA newsletters reflect and tell about what is happening in the school, but editors should be using more of the PTA-information available. The *TN PTA Bulletin*, National's *Our Children* and the wealth of other brochures and pamphlets from the PTA should be regularly scanned for information to include in your newsletter. Just be sure to credit the publication. The *TN PTA Bulletin* is published and posted at www.tnpta.org. *Our Children* is mailed to PTA presidents and is also posted to the member's only site of National PTA's website at www.pta.org.

INCLUDE ANY TOPIC IMPORTANT TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEWSLETTERS

Elementary: Articles by the principal, PTA president, guidance counselors, various Vice Presidents or chairs. It should include a Calendar of Events (testing dates, parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, PTA programs such as Reflections); opportunities for volunteering or tutoring; "thank-yours" for volunteers or donors; special activities such as spelling bees, field days; student artwork, stories or poems. And, it should include something "educational" for the parents such as the importance of parent-teacher conferences, information on parenting skills or how to prepare their child for testing.



Middle/High School: The same as above plus athletic schedules and scholarship information, including the TN PTA and SCC PTA Scholarships for seniors and the Citizenship Essay contest for all high school students. Extra articles can focus on "What to do after graduation" or "What clubs/activities are available."

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations can be a broad term to describe anything from press releases, welcome committee to

keeping school signs up-to-date. Whatever your local unit includes in the Public Relations position, it is the PR position responsibility to keep the local unit PTA in good light. And the PR chair must **NEVER** speak for the PTA. That is the President's job.

PTA WEBSITE



A PTA Website can do much to enhance the information that parents receive via newsletters. Unlike newsletters, website may be updated instantaneously therefore parents may view information in "real" time.

Information that should be on the site would include, a list of board members, contact information, calendar of events or a dates to remember section, links to other PTA or other educational websites.

The following are suggestions for PTAs, which are interested in establishing a PTA website. Included are some guidelines on the types of material, which should or should not be included on a website.

- All content material on the site should be reviewed and approved by the local PTA board. The website is another PTA publication much like a newsletter, brochure, etc. A plan of work for the website must be written and approved in the same manner as any other committee chair or major activity within your PTA.
- Children's personal contact information should not be put on websites. No security measure is 100 % safe and our children need protection from Internet predators. Adult addresses and phone numbers on web pages can pose a security risk as well. The board should address the issue with their membership before posting on the Internet. Permission must be obtained from each member or parent/guardian of a child before information or photos can be displayed.
- It is acceptable to include e-mail addresses and public information such as school office phone numbers, etc. Again, have permission before putting anyone's name or personal e-mail address on the Internet.
- Don't go overboard with graphics. Many visitors will have slow links or web browsers that can't view graphics anyway. When using graphics, use several small images rather than one huge image. Many web browsers can transfer multiple data streams, allowing several of these images to download in parallel with the



main text stream.

- Local unit PTA websites should establish links to the Shelby County Council PTA (www.sccpta.org) Tennessee PTA website (www.tnpta.org) and the National PTA website (www.pta.org).
- Links to websites operated by other organizations may be established with the approval of the President, local PTA board and principal. Note that all links should be reviewed periodically by the local PTA board.
- An email link should be checked for new incoming messages on a regular basis (preferably daily) and someone should respond to emails as quickly as possible.

GET CREATIVE!

To get creative ideas, search similar type local unit sites (for example: if you are in an elementary school, do a search of elementary sites. This will help you glean ideas that are of similar interest to your local unit.

Ask your school to link you to their website. Do the same for theirs. Include any other organizations within your school that has websites (i.e.: band, chorus, student government) that way your PTA can get that much more exposure from parents of students that have specific involvements. You might find more volunteers that way.

AND FINALLY

One of the most important aspects of the Webmaster's job is to keep the website up-to-date. Nothing is more frustrating to a parent than information that is not useful. If the site is not kept up-to-date, then the PTA loses it as a useful tool.