

4.5 Where We Stand: Position Statements

From time to time the California State PTA Board of Managers conducts studies of issues of general concern in light of the Purposes of the PTA and issues that affect the health, education and well-being of children and youth.

A study may result in formulation and adoption of a statement that establishes, clarifies or interprets a PTA position or belief. Position statements provide a basis for action on legislation and other California State PTA action.

Upon adoption, position statements, resolutions and general board positions are positions of the California State PTA and remain in effect until they are amended, rescinded or retired.

No new statement, board resolution or general board position can be introduced that is in conflict with an existing position unless the respective corresponding position is first rescinded. The California State PTA Board of Managers may not amend or rescind a convention resolution and no board position may be in conflict with a convention resolution.

Statements are reviewed every five years to revise, reaffirm or to retire from current use. Statements that include quotes excerpted from state or federal law are reviewed annually. The dates under the title of each statement represent the date first adopted and the date of the latest revision/reaffirmation.

4.5.1 Arts in Education

*Adopted March 1985 – Revised March 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes visual and performing arts should be a basic and integral part of a balanced curriculum for all students.

The California State PTA believes the visual and performing arts can:

- Enhance students' academic performance in all curricular areas;
- Teach a common core of knowledge that will encourage students to appreciate human history and cultures;
- Enable students to develop higher order thinking skills;
- Enable students to discover and to express their own creativity; and
- Help students to develop a life-long appreciation of the arts.

The California State PTA believes a quality arts program should be:

- Structured, sequential, and standards based;
- Offered as an integral part of the regularly scheduled instructional program K-12;
- Taught by qualified teachers who have received appropriate training and in-service programs;
- Enhanced by specialists in the arts who lend their expertise to the arts program;
- Provided to students in facilities specially designed for arts programs;
- Supported by high quality materials and resources;
- An opportunity to explore careers in the arts; and
- A high school graduation requirement.

4.5.2 Assistance to Families in Need

*Adopted February 1998 – Revised January 2004
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes that children are our most important natural resource, that the family is the basic unit of society responsible for the support and nurturing of children, and that every effort must be made to ensure that public policies concur with the best interest of children and families. The California State PTA further believes that society has a responsibility to establish policy that ensures effective community services and assistance programs when necessary for families in need. These programs should be structured and delivered in ways that contribute to the integrity and stability of families and to ensure that children will have adequate support to meet their basic needs.

The California State PTA supports government assistance programs intended to help families survive a temporary crisis and protect children from the extreme effects of poverty. The California State PTA believes that government has the responsibility to plan and coordinate these programs for families in need, establishing a clear definition of responsibility at each level of government and adhering to governmental fiscal responsibility, but keeping foremost the priorities of children and youth.

The California State PTA believes that to be effective in assisting families to become and remain self-sufficient, programs to help families in need of government assistance must include at least the following:

- Job training, job placement and job creation
 - Train and place recipients in job-related programs so they may become self-sufficient;
 - Promote opportunities for teenage parents to complete basic education programs;
 - Provide access to community and adult education, technical schools and job training programs that meet the needs of the highly-skilled technological workplace;

- Coordinate community employment resources for job development;
- Require accountability by families in relation to work, training and education;
- Coordination of health and welfare programs and needed support services
 - Affordable, quality child care that provides flexible hours and guarantees payment to licensed providers until parents transition from assistance to work;
 - Reliable public or private transportation for access to services and employment;
 - A health care system that provides equal access to quality, affordable, basic preventative health care and adequate support services within the field of mental health and guidance;
 - Enforced collection and distribution of legally awarded child support payments;
 - Provision for safe and affordable housing;
 - Adequate nutritional services to prevent health and learning problems associated with malnutrition and hunger;
 - A free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment and funding for non-educational requirements of all individuals with special needs;
- Eligibility requirements
 - Reasonable and flexible time limits that enable families to become self-supporting;
 - Statewide policies that encourage families to stay together when in the best interest of their children and that remove obstacles which eliminate two parent families from eligibility;
 - A system that provides a basic level of existence and does not penalize working families.

The California State PTA believes that programs to assist families in need should include a safety net for individuals who do not meet established criteria for assistance to ensure that all children who reside in California have a right of access to a quality education, adequate food and shelter, and basic health services.

4.5.3 Basic Education

*Adopted May 1979 – Revised March 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that “basic education” is an issue of continuing interest and that it has different meanings for various individuals and groups. The PTA believes that all children and youth have the responsibility and should have the opportunity to develop their abilities to their fullest potential. It is fundamen-

tal to PTA philosophy that the responsibility of the parent as the first teacher of the child must be recognized, encouraged and continually emphasized. It is essential that schools acknowledge the role of parents and consistently involve them at all levels of their children’s education.

The PTA further believes it is essential that communities understand and agree upon the basic elements necessary for one to function as a contributing member in a free democratic society; and that these elements should interact and be relevant in a changing world. Schools need a balanced curriculum, clear standards for student achievement, qualified and competent teaching, and parents and community involvement.

When these are all present students should be able to:

- Develop and demonstrate competence in areas of reading, writing, oral communications, computation; in critical thinking skills and decision-making; and in the ability to apply these skills to all areas of knowledge and to the needs of day-to-day living;
- Develop and demonstrate an understanding in the areas of social studies, science, the arts, health, safety, foreign language, environmental needs, uses of technology, and the world of work;
- Develop an awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity;
- Develop an abiding sense of personal worth, sense of purpose and confidence in one’s own abilities; and
- Develop the skills for being a responsible and caring citizen.

The California State PTA recognizes the need in today’s complex society for a support system for educating children and youth, a system in which schools play a major but not all-inclusive role. In order to provide a basic education for every young person, it is essential that parents, schools and communities cooperate in providing a total learning environment.

4.5.4 Before- and After-School Options for Children and Youth

*Adopted March 2002
Parent Involvement Commission*

The California State PTA believes that high quality before- and after-school programs for all children and youth can provide engaging and enriching environments that improve academic achievement. Statistics show that such programs also reduce truancy and juvenile crime.

The California State PTA recognizes that a range of before- and after-school programs is needed to serve children and youth from pre-school through high school. Each program needs to be based on the particular needs of the young people in the community.

The California State PTA believes the elements of a quality before- and after-school program include:

Program Design

- Programs are academically focused and combine an array of enrichment, cultural and recreational activities.
- Programs are developmentally and culturally appropriate for the children they serve.
- Programs for middle and high school students include career development and life skills training.
- Programs will provide opportunities for children and youth to develop positive relationships with peers and adults.
- Health and wellness are supported through nutritional snacks, exercise programs and prevention information.
- Adequate funding and resources are available.

Facilities and Environment

- School-based programs are preferred; coordination of facilities and equipment between school and program sites is always encouraged.
- Programs comply with relevant health and safety regulations.
- Indoor and outdoor space is safe and sufficient for a diversity of activities.
- Age appropriate equipment and materials for enhancing learning are provided to all who wish to participate.
- Reasonable accommodations to make the program accessible to students with disabilities are made. This may include providing a private location or specialized medical training for the handling of a student's personal needs.

Partnerships

- Parents, schools and community organizations are key stakeholders in the collaboration that is responsible for planning, outreach and evaluation.
- Coordination between the school site staff and program staff enhances the academic components of the program by linking the school day and after-school curriculum.
- Family involvement in planning is encouraged to ensure sustained youth participation and assure that the needs of each participant are met.
- Parent and community volunteers are an integral part of the program.
- Children and youth are actively involved in community programs and engaged in community service.

Staffing

- Staff members have appropriate training for their program responsibilities.
- Staff members are adequately compensated.
- Staff-to-participant ratios are adequate to create positive relationships and mentoring opportunities between staff and participants.
- Staff development is appropriate and training is ongoing.
- Job performance is evaluated on a regular basis.

Program Management

- Program management implements clear short- and long-term goals developed by the collaboration of key stakeholders.
- Relevant policies and procedures are developed and implemented.
- Fiscal oversight and sustainability are maintained.
- Programs are continuously evaluated for effectiveness through the use of multiple measures and result in necessary program modifications.

4.5.5 Character Education

*Adopted 1968 – Revised March 2002
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes the responsibility for character education is shared by the home, the place of worship, the school, and the community. In order to build the foundations for the development of conscience, research shows that in the early years it is critical for each child to develop a close relationship with at least one person who is willing to celebrate the child's life with joy and tenderness and willing to make a long term commitment and the necessary sacrifices for the child's health and well being. When parents and other family members consciously assume this responsibility, the home stimulates effective development of attitudes and values which are important to family living and which will be reflected in school and community behaviors. These examples set by parents, religious leaders, teachers, and community leaders have a profound influence on the kind of person a child becomes.

A character education curriculum should include the concepts of responsibility, respect, integrity, compassion, understanding, honesty, justice, and courage, and should be developed in the context of the basic values which have personal day-to-day application. These concepts should include:

- Respect for one's own worth and dignity;
- Respect for parents, teachers and those in authority;
- Development of self-discipline, self-responsibility and civility to others;

- Respect for home, school and community members;
- Respect for all individuals and an understanding of religious and cultural diversity;
- Consideration of the rights of the group as well as of the individual;
- Development of integrity, honesty, loyalty, trustworthiness, fairness and compassion;
- Development of self-discipline; and
- Ability to think independently, critically, objectively, and creatively.

4.5.6 Charter Schools

*Adopted March 2003 – Revised January 2007
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes charter schools have a valid place in our public school system, because they can provide K-12 students and parents with expanded choices in educational opportunities and may serve as laboratories for programs that can be replicated in other public schools. Public charter schools are most successful when proposed, developed and evaluated in the communities they serve. PTA recognizes that sufficient resources, including facilities, must be provided to charter school students, and to the chartering entity responsible for oversight of charter school performance.

PTA further believes that charter schools must not be operated by for-profit organizations, nor be affiliated with a nonpublic, religious, or home-based school.

PTA believes a charter school must:

- Be located within the same jurisdiction as its chartering district or county office of education.
- Provide a healthy and safe learning environment for all children.
- Not discriminate against any pupil on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, gender, ability or disability, sexual orientation, language or socio-economic status, or immigration status.
- Be publicly funded in a manner that is equitable to and does not reduce resources for other public schools in the chartering entity.
- Be held fiscally and academically accountable to the parents and community by the local chartering entity.
- Be located in facilities that meet state school building code standards and be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Provide a curriculum that is aligned to the California state academic content standards and offers at least the number of instructional minutes as required by the California State Education Code, and require students

to meet the state's minimum requirements for graduation.

- Follow all state and federal assessment and reporting requirements and be held to the same standards of academic accountability as all other public schools.
- Belong to a Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) for special education funding purposes and provide special needs students with all services as set forth in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) and 504 accommodations.
- Hire teachers and administrators who meet the same credentialing requirements as those in other California public schools.
- Encourage effective teacher preparation and ongoing professional development.
- Involve parents in meaningful decision-making.
- Maintain current student records, make student records available for inspection by parents and the chartering entity, ensure records follow a student who withdraws or is expelled from a charter school, and notify the chartering entity when a student leaves the charter school for any reason.

4.5.7 Child Abuse

*Adopted March 1989 – Revised October 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes children are the future and must be protected from harm. PTA further believes all children are entitled to live and grow in an atmosphere of love and respect, and no child should be subjected to physical, psychological, verbal or sexual abuse. PTA, as the state's largest child advocacy organization, must assume a leadership role to achieve these goals.

The California State PTA advocates:

- Public education about the unmet needs of and public responsibility to children and families;
- Public education about the prevalence, causes, methods of intervention and prevention of child abuse;
- Public education about programs and assistance available to victims and their families;
- Parenting skills workshops and classes for parents and teenagers;
- Public education for children on the identification of abuse and the survival skills they need to learn to be safe;
- Thorough implementation of state laws requiring school districts to provide training for school personnel (to include classroom aides, yard duty personnel and custodians) in the identification, prevention, treatment and reporting of child abuse;

- School, law enforcement, courts and social service agencies working cooperatively and acting promptly in handling cases of suspected child abuse;
- Team building workshops so active members in the community can get acquainted with each other;
- Adequate funding for treatment centers and temporary shelters; and
- Anonymous tip lines established and advertised for safe public reporting.

4.5.8 Child Care

*Adopted March 1989 – Revised March 2005
Community Concerns and Parent Involvement
Commissions*

The California State PTA believes that provision of quality child care is a shared responsibility of parents/guardians, providers, appropriate governmental agencies, business and industry, and the community at large. PTA also recognizes the need for a wide variety of programs and services to address the diverse child care needs of families throughout the state and the differing needs of children of various ages.

The California State PTA believes that the minimum indicators of program quality include:

- A safe, secure, healthy, developmentally appropriate, and stimulating environment (home-, school-, or center-based) that enhances the physical, social-emotional, linguistic, cultural, creative and cognitive development of all enrolled children;
- A current, valid state child care provider license;
- Facilities appropriate to the type of care and ages of children, including adequate indoor and outdoor space as defined in state licensing requirements;
- Appropriate group sizes and teacher:child ratios;
- Providers who are adequately trained in early childhood education and child development;
- A policy that forbids the use of corporal punishment;
- A written description of programs and services that includes an explanation of developmental appropriateness of activities and materials made available to parents/guardians and concerned agencies;
- An open door policy for parents/guardians and opportunities for parent involvement in all aspects of the program, including policy, administration and curriculum; and
- A parent/guardian education program provided by the child care provider or by other qualified agencies.

The California State PTA supports:

- Uniform licensing standards for child care centers;

- Background and criminal checks on all personnel, volunteers, and any other adults who may reside in the facility;
- Strengthening of the state's facility inspection program;
- Child care homes to have liability insurance or a bond covering injury to clients and guests;
- Crisis and natural disaster preparedness checklist given to all parents/guardians and posted at centers;
- Personnel of child day care facilities (day care centers, family day care homes and out of school youth centers) to have current certification in preventive health practices including pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and pediatric first aid;
- High standards for preparation and continuing education of child care teachers and providers, with the state taking a leadership role in providing educational programs for teachers and providers;
- Adequate salaries for child care providers in order to attract and maintain quality personnel;
- Tax incentives for employers to provide on-site or off-site child care and/or related options for employees, including flex time, job sharing and/or use of benefit packages;
- State and federal tax deduction credits for child care costs;
- Increased public and private funding for program improvements and expansions;
- Increased cooperation between government, community, agencies and business in providing for child care services that meet the unique needs of each community;
- Public policy at state and local levels that includes incentives for, and removes obstacles to, employer involvement in addressing the child care needs of working parents/guardians;
- State support of high quality child care, including a wide variety of program types and services;
- School- or community-based child care resource, referral and provider centers that:
 - Serve as referral agencies for child care services within the community;
 - Are resources to support and monitor providers; and
 - Ensure quality care for preschool and school-aged children including children with special needs;
- Monitoring of recreational programs to ensure quality, safety, and adequate supervision of children;
- Policies that provide for and encourage unlimited parent/guardian access to the facility; and

- State leadership in providing parent education and support programs through public schools, community colleges, colleges, universities, and other appropriate organizations and agencies.

4.5.9 Child Victims/Witnesses Rights

*Adopted May 1986 – Revised March 2004
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes it is important to reduce trauma in all phases of a child's life including trauma caused by actions pursued through the court system. PTA believes it is important to protect the rights of child victims/witnesses at all times including, but not limited to, investigations and courtroom testimony. PTA believes it is important for child victims/witnesses to receive supportive assistance from trained personnel throughout the course of any criminal proceeding.

California State PTA believes that efforts should be made to advocate for and address the needs of child witnesses/victims by:

- Training law enforcement, legal and judicial personnel in appropriate and age-/ability-specific procedures for interacting with a child victim/witness in a respectful, compassionate and caring manner;
- Ensuring a child's right to have access to assignment of a trained child advocate to protect his/her interests;
- Permitting support attendants for the child throughout the court proceedings;
- Providing appropriate treatment services and a list of available resources/referrals;
- Guaranteeing child victims/witnesses the rights of privacy and confidentiality;
- Questioning a child in a manner appropriate to his/her chronological and/or mental age;
- Minimizing the number of interviews and investigations;
- Trying multi-jurisdictional cases in only one jurisdiction;
- Allowing Out of Court Statements, videotaped statements and/or depositions to be admitted as evidence;
- Allowing closed-circuit testimony, thereby ensuring that a child is protected from direct confrontation with the accused;
- Permitting special methods of questioning of the child witness (requiring attorneys to remain seated during questioning, allowing the judge to question the witness, limiting the time allowed for testimony); and
- Altering the courtroom setting to make it easier for the child to testify.

4.5.10 Children With HIV/AIDS: School Attendance

*Adopted October 1988 – Reaffirmed March 2004
Health Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that HIV/AIDS is an extremely serious condition that threatens the health and well-being of all children and youth.

The PTA believes that every child has the right to a free, public education in an appropriate setting.

The PTA further believes that in a confirmed case of HIV/AIDS, the child's parents or guardians, physician, public health officials and appropriate school personnel should be responsible for determining the appropriate educational program for that school child in compliance with state and federal mandates.

4.5.11 Credentialed School Personnel

*Adopted March 1984 – Revised March 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes all students shall have access to well prepared and highly effective teachers, certified staff and administrators in the public schools of California. PTA supports high standards for all credentialed school personnel working with students beginning with quality comprehensive preparation programs for both teachers and administrators. PTA believes that in order to attract and retain qualified people to teaching, high standards must be accompanied by adequate salaries, support services and ongoing professional development.

PTA believes there must be:

- Increased capacities of universities to prepare sufficient numbers of certificated teachers for public schools;
- Careful screening of candidates for all credential programs at institutions of higher education to ensure that candidates demonstrate a strong potential for teaching;
- Emphasis on quality training programs for each level of credentialing;
- Training in strategies for working with parent/guardians and the community to encourage their full participation in the educational process as an integral part of all teacher/administrator certification programs;
- An emphasis on recruiting candidates with a willingness to work with the diverse constituencies, challenges and needs of California's public schools;
- Teachers and administrators that are representative of California's diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds;
- Pre-intern and intern programs for prospective teacher credential candidates that provide guidance,

counseling and support services by assigned mentors;

- Alternative methods of certification that ensure quality of instruction by requiring applicants to meet initial competency requirements and to complete an equivalent course of teacher preparation within a specified time period;
- Background checks in the hiring and assignment processes for all credentialed school personnel;
- Work assignments based on the subject of a teacher's credential, determined by such processes that are compatible with preserving the integrity of the instructional program;
- Appropriate support for beginning teachers and administrators;
- A requirement that all credentialed school personnel meet standards for ethical behavior and demonstrate respect for students and others;
- An understanding that employment is contingent upon meeting clearly established performance standards and fulfillment of continued professional growth requirements;
- Ongoing constructive and systematic evaluation programs for all credentialed school personnel;
- Appropriate staff development for all credentialed school personnel that will answer the professional needs of the individual and the individual school site;
- Certification programs and ongoing staff development that enables teachers and administrators to work effectively with all parents/guardians and with service providers to meet the needs of our diverse student population;
- More options available to paraprofessionals and subject matter experts who are actively seeking proper certification;
- A longer instructional school year and instructional school day to provide increased time for both staff development and for student-teacher contact/instructional time; and
- Practical experience/application required during the undergraduate courses.

4.5.12 Delinquency Prevention

*Adopted March 1974 – Revised March 2004
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes that every child should have the opportunity to become a self-respecting, contributing member of society. For a variety of reasons, some children find themselves “at risk” and as a result, the normal sequence of events for living a law-abiding life is threatened.

In order to assist these “at risk” children and youth, delinquency prevention programs must be developed and implemented in communities. Programs should invest in effective locally-based strategies and expand opportunities for youth to participate in structured activities with adult supervision outside school hours.

Reducing delinquency and youth violence should be the primary goal of any prevention program. Every effort should be made to develop and implement delinquency prevention programs that enhance the living environment by fostering positive social interaction, encouraging strong bonding within the family and creating attachments within the community.

Many different approaches can work to prevent delinquency. Specifically, prevention programs should:

- Address the highest priority problem areas, at appropriate developmental stages, and identify strengths (risk factors and protective factors) to which children in a particular community are exposed;
- Focus most strongly on populations exposed to a number of risk factors;
- Address multiple risk factors in multiple settings, such as family, schools and peer groups;
- Offer comprehensive interventions across many systems, including health and education, and deal simultaneously with many aspects of juveniles' lives;
- Provide intensive contact with at-risk juveniles, often involving multiple contacts per week or even on a daily basis;
- Build on juveniles' strengths and create opportunities for physical, social, mental and emotional development that fosters the expansion of positive self-esteem;
- Deal with juveniles in the context of their relationship to and with others, rather than focus solely on the individual;
- Include the participation of parents and/or guardians in development and implementation and contain a component of parental education, support and information on how to deal with “at risk” children and;
- Utilize the available community intervention programs through coordinated cooperative endeavors with law enforcement and social service agencies.

The California State PTA believes that through a responsive network of community-based services the obstacles faced by our most vulnerable children and their families can be overcome, their needs can be met and they can flourish as responsible, contributing members of society.

4.5.13 Education of English Language Learners†

*Adopted November 1985 – Revised July 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes English language learners must be provided an education that will allow them the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to realize their full potential.

The California State PTA further believes:

- The primary purpose of any language acquisition program for limited- and non-English speaking students should be to make a successful transition into English so they may progress well in the regular education program;
- The accurate assessment of each student's English and native language and academic skills is necessary to ensure placement in the program that best meets the educational needs of that student;
- English Language Learners should be served by appropriately credentialed staff;
- Appropriate staff development opportunities, including a multicultural component, should be provided locally to assist teachers who instruct limited- and non-English speaking students;
- Local school districts must develop policies for and methods of achieving the above goals, and financial resources must be provided to districts for students to achieve proficiency;
- Local school districts should evaluate their language acquisition programs regularly and report findings to the community;
- Parents have the right and the responsibility to participate in all decisions regarding the placement of their children in any program and must have recourse to an appeals process; and
- Adequate, objective and language-appropriate information is available to parents so they can make informed decisions and be effective partners in their children's education.

† See related position statements: Education: Categorical Programs, Encroachment: Effect on Public Education.

4.5.14 Education: Categorical Programs†

*Adopted March 1993 – Revised January 2005
Education Commission*

The California State PTA supports the development and implementation of categorical programs* to meet the educational needs of all students, including students with special needs such as physical and learning disabilities, limited English proficiency, and economic disadvantages, and gifted and talented children and youth. PTA believes this can be accomplished by the use of restricted categorical funding streams that meet specific education/instructional goals. PTA further believes the

legislature and the California Department of Education must establish clear guidelines and accountability standards for categorical programs. To ensure that the focus on student learning is maintained, laws and regulations for categorical funding school include:

- Clear fiscal and program accountability measures, which build on the state's existing accountability system and ensure that funding is expended for the intended purposes and outcomes established for each categorical program;
- Fiscal accountability standards to ensure that services to the category of students generating the categorical funds are safeguarded;
- Parental information guidelines that ensure parents/guardians are informed of program options and are included in the decision-making process regarding the educational needs of their children;
- Periodic review of the effectiveness and need of each categorical program.

PTA also supports flexibility in funding, often referred to as block grants,** based on measurable, enhanced student learning. However, PTA believes that stringent guidelines and accountability standards must be established for any system granting program flexibility to schools and school districts. PTA would oppose block grant proposals that eliminate the targeted purpose of categorical programs created to address specific needs not being met at the state and local level. In order to ensure that student needs continue to be met, guidelines for establishing block grants should include:

- The grouping of programs that incorporate similar characteristics or serve similar groups of students;
- Recognition that students with special needs, such as disabled or disadvantaged children need additional resources to meet state standards for student achievement;
- Fiscal and program accountability standards that ensure funds are spent for the purposes and outcomes intended for the programs within the block grant;
- Sufficient planning time to provide for the transition from individual categorical program delivery to a block grant system, including time to inform parents/guardians of program changes and to include them in any decisions that affect the education of their children.

*The term "categorical program" is not defined in state law, but generally refers to a funding program that conditions the receipt of funds on a "category" of expense including, but not limited to, such programs as special education, staff development, instructional materials, and class size reduction.

**The definition of "block grant" is not defined in state law, but usually refers to funds that were once categorical, but have been "decategorized" so funds can be

used at the discretion of the receiving school or school district.

† See related position statement: Encroachment: Effect on Public Education.

4.5.15 Education: Higher Education

*Adopted April 2005
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes that California's system of public higher education, including community colleges, the California colleges, the California State University, and the University of California, plays a critical role in the economic and cultural vitality of our state and nation. Investment in students' postsecondary education enriches the lives of all Californians, and provides skilled workers to meet the needs of California's global economy.

PTA strongly believes that every student who meets the established eligibility requirements must be allowed access to the appropriate level of California's system of higher education; financial hardship should not prohibit eligible students from attending institutions of higher education and efforts should be made to provide financial assistance to students.

PTA supports increasing the number and amount of state and federal grants for students facing financial hardships, simplifying the application process for all forms of financial aid, improving the access to information on postsecondary financial aid, and expanding access to in-state tuition levels for California residents.

PTA further believes that schools and colleges should work together to facilitate articulation from secondary to higher education.

The California State PTA recognizes that California's institutions of higher education are vital to preparing qualified educators for California's public schools. Californians must ensure that public schools of education have the resources to produce the teachers and administrators needed to staff pre-K through grade 12 public schools, and to prepare experts in the field of teaching and learning.

The California State PTA supports adequate funding for California's system of higher education to ensure that eligible students have access to a higher education and that California provides the qualified educators needed for our public schools.

4.5.16 Education: Opposing Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits and Deductions as Systems of Education Aid

*Adopted November 1991 – Revised January 2002
Education Commission*

The California State PTA opposes tuition tax credits and deductions for elementary and secondary school tuition and other education-related expenses for public and

nonpublic school students. The California State PTA also opposes any voucher education proposal which would divert public funds to nonpublic schools.

The California State PTA believes that these funding methods would have a detrimental effect on our public school system. Such funding would create division and separation within the community and negate efforts to desegregate our schools. It is the opinion of the California State PTA that vouchers and similar systems violate the legal precedence of separation of church and state.

The California State PTA recognizes that changes must be made within the public schools to provide an equitable and excellent educational opportunity for every child. However, vouchers, tax credits, deductions and other such funding sources do not provide the means for bringing about improvements in our public schools.

The California State PTA supports our system of public education as the major vehicle for perpetuating the basic values of a democratic system of government. This system must be strengthened, must continue to be accountable to the public and must be supported by adequate public funds.

Adapted from the National PTA Board of Directors statement, *Opposing Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits and Deductions as Systems of Education Aid*.

4.5.17 Education: Parental Choice in Public Schools

*Adopted January 1989 – Revised January 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes it is important for parents, educators, and community members to acknowledge that no one educational program is best for all students. Schools and parents together must address the different ways students learn and how the public school system can provide the best education for all students. PTA supports public education, and has historically opposed and continues to oppose any tuition tax credit system or voucher that would allow public funds to flow to private/parochial schools.

PTA supports parental choice within the public school system. Parental choice may be defined as giving parents the right to select their children's schools from among a range of possible options. The California State PTA believes options can be created within the public school system. PTAs should work with their local school districts in seeking creative ways of providing alternative programs. PTA believes that parental choice should be based on the educational needs of individual students with consideration for the child care needs of families.

Any system of "choice" supported by the California State PTA must meet the following criteria:

- Availability of adequate and objective information, in a variety of languages as needed, about all public

schools so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's schooling;

- Student admission is based on a fair, equitable and timely process at all schools;
- Equal access to educational opportunities including standards based curriculum and instruction, and high expectations for student achievement;
- Racial/ethnic/socioeconomic diversity of receiving or sending schools/school districts must be considered and maintained; and
- Parents have opportunities for meaningful involvement in their children's schools.

PTA encourages parents to work with their school districts to develop enriching educational opportunities and instructional programs for all students.

4.5.18 Education: Support of Public Education

*Adopted October 1991 – Revised March 2004
Education Commission*

PTA supports and encourages excellence in public education and has since its founding in 1897. The California State PTA believes that public education provides a common experience for building and maintaining a commitment to the basic values of a democratic system of government. A strong public education system is vital to California's well-being in a global society.

The California State PTA believes that three key components to excellence in our public system of education are parental and community involvement, competent and caring educators, and adequate funding.

The California State PTA supports strong parent involvement programs in all public schools. Research shows the more involved parents and community members become in working with and supporting their schools, the higher the quality of education and the greater the opportunity for student success.

The California State PTA believes that educational opportunities for students are dependent on the quality of instructional programs and personnel. California State PTA supports professional excellence of teachers and administrators in their preparation, recruitment, professional development and retention.

The California State PTA recognized that excellence in education will cost money. All levels of government, local, state and federal, must share in providing adequate funding for our schools.

In order to strengthen our public schools and provide every student with an equitable and excellent education, the California State PTA believes that parent(s) and employee organization(s) rights and responsibilities must be exercised. They should work to ensure that:

- The community sustains a viable public school system;

- Parents have the opportunity for involvement in their children's school;
- Appropriate transportation is provided for students to ensure equity;
- Specialized schools provide for a fair selection process;
- Standards governing school curricula, personnel and student performance provide access to equal opportunities; and
- Adequate, objective and language-appropriate information must be made available to parents so they can make informed decisions and be effective partners in their children's education.

Strengthening the public schools requires that all Californians work together and provide support for our public school system. The priority of California must be children and public education.

Adapted from the National PTA Board of Directors Statement, Support of Public Education.

4.5.19 Education: The Early Years, Ages 3 To 6

*Adopted March 1988 – Revised March 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes the significant positive or negative impact early education experiences have on a child's self-esteem, social competence and readiness to achieve academically. It is at this time in their lives that children acquire their knowledge about the physical and social worlds in which they live.

The California State PTA believes that all children ages three to six should have the opportunity to experience learning that is developmentally appropriate. There are certain components that are essential to any education program if children are to become successful learners.

These components include, but are not limited to:

- An age-appropriate curriculum that provides physical, intellectual, social and emotional experiences for the individual child;
- Teachers with specialized early childhood training and commitment who understand how young children learn and know how to provide the appropriate curriculum;
- A flexible educational setting where each child's growth and maturity determines his or her pace for advancement; and
- A strong parent involvement component designed to
 - Enable parents to enhance the child's development at home by providing parents with the knowledge needed to be their child's first teachers, emphasizing the importance of the first five years on children's long-term education success;

- Help parents understand the age-appropriate well-rounded environment and the functions of the varied activities provided at school; and
- Empower parents as advocates for implementation of an age-appropriate well-rounded educational program for all students.
- Public schools should be prepared to meet all students' needs as they enter kindergarten by collaborating with pre-school programs and parent/guardians in developing transition plans.

The California State PTA recognizes on-going fiscal constraints on public education K-12. Therefore, PTA supports the concept that creative solutions can be found to finance education for ages three to six through a combined use of public and private funds.

4.5.20 Education: The Elementary Years, Ages 6 to 10

*Adopted April 1990 – Revised March 2001
Education Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that children in the primary and elementary grades have an abundance of physical and intellectual energy, and that their physical and emotional growth, intellectual gains and shifting interests vary widely and develop unevenly. With few exceptions, every child is able to learn when his/her individual capability is recognized and his/her developing self-concept is carefully nurtured.

The California State PTA believes that the elementary school must provide the environment, resources and structure that will enable each child to be a successful learner and to develop a positive self-image. Schools must effectively align standards, curriculum, assessment and accountability to ensure all students meet or exceed grade-level academic content standards. Components of a productive learning environment include, but are not limited to:

- A challenging and integrated curriculum that allows children to be engaged actively in the learning process;
- Academic activities that lead to understanding of course content while encouraging proficiency in basic skills and development of critical thinking skills;
- Flexible teaching strategies and flexible groupings that include children with varying achievement and ability levels, as appropriate, to ensure that each student achieves maximum potential;
- Intervention strategies including counseling, and appropriate resources to provide needed assistance for students identified as not meeting grade-level academic content standards;
- Teaching students to become responsible members of the community;

- Counseling to help every student develop a positive self-image and to combat the causes of at-risk behaviors; and
- Parent involvement that emphasizes
 - Communication and cooperation with school staff in order to develop mutual understanding;
 - An understanding of the “parent as partner” role in areas such as homework, school progress, testing programs, academic and career planning; and
 - Empowering parents to be advocates for their own children’s educational needs.

4.5.21 Education: The Middle Years, Ages 10 to 14

*Adopted January 1989 – Revised March 1999
Education Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that young adolescents have special needs. Early adolescence is a time of rapid physical, emotional, social, and intellectual changes. These years serve as a transition, the vital link between childhood and older adolescence.

The California State PTA believes the middle school must:

- Provide an environment for successful transition by acknowledging that the personal developmental needs of adolescent students must be addressed in order to open the way for academic achievement;
- Have a commitment to and a sincere concern for its students;
- Create a student centered environment where staff encourages each individual student to feel a sense of “connectedness” to the school; and
- Provide a nurturing environment with ready access to counseling.

PTA further believes there are certain components that are essential to middle grade educational programs including, but not limited to:

- A configuration that groups grades 6, 7, and 8 or the creation of a “school-within-a-school” for those grades;
- A daily schedule that allows for blocks of instructional time to accommodate interdisciplinary team teaching and the integration of core curriculum subjects in groupings with instruction that meets the academic needs of all students;
- A credentialed staff (teachers, counselors and administrators) who
 - Are committed to working with middle grade students;

- Are qualified to teach young adolescents and who have been specially prepared for assignments to the middle grades;
- Make decisions on instructional programs that enhance the intellectual and emotional development of all students.
- A variety of staff development options to enable teachers to gain the skills to use those teaching strategies that have proven effective with students of this age group;
- A comprehensive and flexible guidance/counseling plan to pursue career and educational goals that is developed with students and their parents;
- A student advisement program, in addition to program counseling services, that provides students a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult throughout the middle grade years to assure continuity in providing advice on academic, personal and peer-relationship matters; and
- A strong parent education/involvement program designed to
 - Help parents understand the physical, social, and intellectual needs of young adolescent students, and how the school may assist in meeting these needs;
 - Assist parents to understand the importance of the development of an educational plan that ensures academic growth and a successful transition from school-to-work;
 - Give parents meaningful roles in school governance;
 - Communicate with families about the school program and students' progress; and
 - Offer families opportunities to support the learning process at home and at school.

4.5.22 Education: The High School Years, Ages 14 to 18

*Adopted April 1991 – Revised March 2003
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes the future of our country depends upon how well we educate our students. We must ensure that all students, English and non-English speaking, have equal access to academically rigorous instructional programs that foster the ability to think critically and solve problems. Students should leave high school with a body of knowledge that opens the door to continued education, the world of work and lifelong learning. We must prevent students from dropping out of school. High schools must offer the most comprehensive and diversified education possible.

The California State PTA believes parent involvement should not end when the student enters high school. It

is vital that parents must continue to take an active role in helping their student succeed.

Therefore the California State PTA supports a strong parent involvement component with school practices that are designed to:

- welcome and empower parents, to work collaboratively with students, teachers and administrators to make decisions and to share in setting the goals and direction of the school, thus promoting improved curriculum, better teaching and high student achievement;
- assist parents, teachers and administrators in communicating and becoming aware of one another's roles regarding student achievement; and
- provide multiple opportunities for parents and students to access the resources on graduation requirements, college entrance requirements and career opportunities.

The capability to build a student's sense of belonging is a fundamental step in shaping a high school. A sense of belonging can help to instill values and improve learning. Certain components are essential to effective high school education programs.

These include but are not limited to:

- A belief by teachers, administrators and counselors that every student has the ability to learn and will be encouraged to achieve his or her highest potential;
- Student access to high quality standard based core curriculum, advanced level courses and the arts;
- A high quality, diverse instructional program whose delivery allows students to make connections between classroom learning and its application to real life situations;
- Teachers who use relevant innovative instructional strategies that engage students in active learning that prepares them with the knowledge and life skills they need to be productive, contributing adults;
- Counseling and guidance assistance to help students make informed decisions that meet their individual needs;
- A setting that allows for alternatives to the traditional school;
- Effective high school drop out prevention and intervention programs to provide:
 - Collaboration with community agencies;
 - Community service and effective co-curricular activities;
 - School-business partnerships and internships;
 - Classes in life skills to prepare students for parenthood, for decision-making, and recognizing the consequences of choices;
- Diversity awareness integrated into the curriculum;

- Opportunities for all students to have access throughout the curriculum to the study of technology, its applications, and the use of technology as a tool;
- Opportunities for career technical education to serve the needs of all students†;
- School opportunities for students to participate in community service;
- Quality co-curricular and extra curricular activities and programs, such as but not limited to athletics, visual or performing arts.

†See related position statement: School-to-Work/Career (4.5.61).

4.5.23 Encroachment: Effect on Public Education†

*Adopted March 1983 – Revised January 2005
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes it is essential to appropriate adequate resources to fully fund all mandated programs and services such as special education. Since school districts are legally obligated to implement all mandates, enactment of such laws without sufficient funds for total implementation imposes severe fiscal constraints on the overall educational program of the district. This encroachment diminishes the funding available for programs supported by the district's general fund and, consequently, adversely affects the ability of school districts to provide a quality education for all students.

†See related position statements: Education: Categorical Programs (4.5.14); Education of English Language Learners (4.5.13); and Special Education (4.5.63).

4.5.24 Energy Conservation

*Adopted May 1981 – Reaffirmed July 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that present conditions necessitate the development of alternative sources, conservation, and the setting of priorities for uses of energy. Decisions regarding the type and location of alternative energy sources have environmental, social, political, and economic consequences in communities. In the search for and development of energy alternatives, environmental factors must be balanced with energy needs to ensure present and future generations their right to live in a safe and healthy community.

The California State PTA believes:

- Alternative sources of energy should be encouraged. PTAs at all levels should promote public awareness programs to keep its members and the community informed about current technological advances and proposed sites for energy generating facilities;
- The PTA should work with other community groups in developing the awareness, knowledge and skills nec-

essary to participate intelligently in the solution of short- and long-term energy problems;

- Each school should be urged to set an example of energy awareness, conservation and management;
- The PTA should encourage participation in communitywide public awareness education regarding the benefits of recycling; and
- Schools should be encouraged to implement the Education Code provisions concerning environmental instruction designed to teach students to value and conserve natural resources.

4.5.25 Environmental Health and Environmental Education

*Adopted March 2007
Health Commission*

The California State PTA believes all children and youth have the right to live and attend school in a healthy environment free from avoidable environmental hazards.

The California State PTA seeks to educate its members to recognize the importance of a healthy environment and the potential dangers that environmental contamination poses for children's developing minds and bodies. PTA supports the implementation of a comprehensive K-12 environmental education curriculum for all students.

To protect the environment and human health, PTA urges its members to become knowledgeable about the environmental conditions in their schools and communities and about current efforts to protect or improve the local environment, both indoors and out.

PTAs are urged to work with their local school health councils and school wellness programs to develop and implement tools that will help them assess and address unhealthy environmental conditions in schools and communities. Such conditions may include indoor air quality, high lead levels in water, exposures to pesticide drift in agricultural communities, and proximity to waste incinerators.

PTAs are urged to consider the precautionary principle that states that in the absence of proof that something is safe, it is better to err on the side of caution and avoid exposure.

California State PTA recognizes that protecting the environment and human health is a complex, interconnected and perpetual endeavor. PTA encourages schools, families, and communities to support environmental decision-making processes that are open to all and that are based on stewardship of the environment and concern for the people who live in it, especially the most vulnerable, our children.

4.5.26 Equal Rights

*Adopted 1983 – Reaffirmed January 2000
Legislation Committee*

The California State PTA believes all children and youth should have equal opportunities to develop and reach their maximum potential. The California State PTA is dedicated to the principles of equal justice, equal privileges, equal opportunities and equal responsibilities for all individuals in every phase of life. Therefore, the California State PTA supports equal rights for all.

4.5.27 Fair Housing

*Adopted May 1981 – Reaffirmed July 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes:

- All families need to have access to safe and affordable housing;
- There is necessity for enactment and enforcement of laws to end discrimination in the marketing, sale and/or rental of housing;
- Encouragement should be given to the formation of broadly based community action groups to promote citizen understanding of housing issues and involvement in advocating programs which will meet the housing needs in their communities; and
- Encouragement should be given to the development of rental and individually owned homes for low- and moderate-income families and that such housing should not be isolated within local communities.

PTAs should encourage city councils, county boards of supervisors, and city and county housing authorities to

- Adopt and implement balanced community policies which stipulate a mix of housing types as well as provisions for the development of housing for low- and moderate-income families;
- Develop and implement programs utilizing all available funding sources to provide rental and individually owned single- and multi-family housing for low- and moderate-income families.

4.5.28 Family Planning

*Adopted January 1966 – Reaffirmed May 2002
Parent Involvement Commission*

The California State PTA believes there should be equal access to family planning guidance and services regardless of the economic or geographic circumstances of any family or individual. PTA further believes persons seeking family planning should be able to receive those services compatible with their beliefs and needs.

In cooperating with community programs for family planning, PTA expresses its concern for maternal and child

health and responsible parenthood necessary for the creation of a secure family atmosphere.

4.5.29 Family Responsibility and Accountability

*Adopted March 1989 – Revised May 2004
Parent Involvement Commission*

The California State PTA believes all children and youth are entitled to equal privileges, equal justice, and equal opportunities. In order for children to develop into mature, productive adult citizens, PTA believes they need:

- Stability in their family settings;
- Physical and emotional support conducive to healthy growth and development;
- Financial support to meet basic needs and, to the extent possible within the family's means, to enrich the child's development.

The California State PTA believes the family is the basic unit in our society responsible for the support and nurturing of children. PTA further believes that both parents/guardians, whether living together or apart, have joint responsibility to support and educate their children, and to promote optimal development of each child. This means:

- Support of children until age 18;
- Support of children (until age 22) who are unmarried or otherwise unemancipated and who are students in good standing, attending high school or an accredited institution for higher learning or vocational training.

PTA supports programs that hold parents/guardians accountable for meeting these responsibilities.

4.5.30 Family Services

*Adopted May 1966 – Reaffirmed July 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes that children should not be deprived or penalized because of the family situation in which they live.

California State PTA supports:

- Coordination of health, welfare and educational services to meet family needs;
- Programs that provide education and training to enhance parenting skills to meet the needs of individual families;
- Services that enable children with special needs to take advantage of all educational opportunities;
- Services for children whose parents are incapacitated or temporarily absent from the home, who have been separated from their families;

- Programs and services for individuals and families who are touched by the juvenile justice and foster care systems; and
- Full funding for mandated programs.

The California State PTA believes every child has the right to be provided the opportunity to become a self-respecting, contributing member of society.

4.5.31 Firearms and Assault Weapons

*Adopted July 1990 – Revised March 2005
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA has a long history and proud tradition of supporting legislation and programs for the safety and protection of children, youth, and families. The California State PTA supports state and federal legislation and restrictions that would:

- Require a firearm licensure procedure that includes a waiting period and background check to screen out illegal firearm purchasers such as convicted felons and drug-related offenders;
- Require a firearm licensing procedure that includes proof of passing a state-certified course in appropriate firearms use and safe handling practice;
- Require safety devices, including child-proof trigger locks, on all firearms offered for sale, delivery or transfer;
- Prohibit sale and possession of assault weapons for non-military/non-law enforcement use and require a registration process for those persons who now legally own such firearms;
- Prohibit for non-military/non-law enforcement purposes, the manufacture, importation, possession, sale or resale of accessories and ammunition designed for assault weapons;
- Ban the manufacture, sale or possession of “junk guns”/Saturday Night Specials;
- Ban armor piercing ammunition;
- Control the illegal possession of firearms and other lethal weapons on school campuses.

The California State PTA further supports:

- Education programs that stress the importance of firearm safety and awareness, including the risks of unsecured firearms in the home, and in the use and availability of firearm safety devices, including trigger locks;
- Education programs to inform parents and community members about the harm and injury handgun violence inflicts on children and youth;
- Public awareness campaigns regarding the importance of legislation for the safety and protection of the public, especially children and youth;

- Efforts to seek and support legislation on the safety and protection of the public, including children and youth.

4.5.32 Freedom to Learn

*Adopted January 1966 – Revised April 2005
Education Commission*

In a free society, public schools, universities, colleges and libraries exist, in part, for the development and exchange of ideas. The California State PTA believes these institutions can accomplish this objective only by assuming their responsibility to provide opportunities for each individual to rid himself of the bonds of ignorance and the restrictions of prejudice, without intimidation.

The California State PTA believes:

- Schools and colleges should offer a wide range of learning experiences appropriate to the student’s intellectual, physical and emotional maturity;
- Libraries, technology and all other types of instructional resources should be adequate in quality and quantity to provide for scholarly research;
- An educational environment should stimulate full investigation of all aspects of a subject with freedom of inquiry and freedom of discussion;
- Full opportunity should be provided for each individual to determine his own opinions.

PTA is concerned that the development of positive attitudes and deep understanding be based on factual information and fundamental concepts. Education should be free from the kinds of emotional pressures which tend to restrict freedom of reason and choice.

4.5.33 Gang Awareness

*Adopted May 1989 – Revised October 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes the harmful impact of gangs on our children and youth. Gang participation is increasing at an alarming rate in California.

Throughout California, gang members recruit, threaten, harass, and coerce children into joining gangs. Gangs usually cause children to avoid family members, friends, school and extra-curricular activities, and membership leads to behavioral changes. Children and youth who join gangs often become involved in criminal activities.

Education is the first and most important step in awareness of gangs and gang activities. Parents armed with such basic knowledge are better able to protect their children from gang involvement.

PTA advocates:

- Partnering with local law enforcement agencies to obtain current information regarding gangs and gang activity in the community;
- Educating parents about gangs; reasons why juveniles join, recognition of gang characteristics and symbols, current trends and how to steer their children away from gangs;
- The adoption and the implementation of school district policies designed to protect children, youth, and staff from gangs; and
- Developing community partnerships to mobilize local actions and resources to create positive alternatives to gang involvement.

4.5.34 Health Care Access for Children, Youth, Pregnant Women, and Their Families

*Adopted March 1992 – Reaffirmed March 2004
Health Commission*

The California State PTA understands the importance of good health to a child's quality of life and believes that:

- A child's health and well-being begin prior to birth;
- Appropriate, timely health care is necessary for each child to have the opportunity to develop to his or her fullest potential, both physically and mentally; and
- Children, youth, pregnant women and their families are entitled to appropriate, confidential, and timely health care.

The California State PTA recognizes that:

- A child's ability to learn is directly related to his or her state of health and that inadequate health care can be a barrier to education;
- Basic preventive health care can prevent permanent disability or lengthy remediation, and is a cost-effective use of health care dollars; and
- Current statistics indicate that many children and families in the United States have no health insurance, either public or private.

The California State PTA supports efforts to provide equal access to quality, affordable basic preventive health care for all children, youth, pregnant women, and their families.

4.5.35 Health Education

*Adopted January 1968 – Revised January 2005
Health Commission*

The California State PTA is concerned for the health and well-being of all children and youth. The California State PTA believes that comprehensive health education is essential for each child to develop to his fullest potential. The California State PTA believes that comprehensive

health education includes physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

The California State PTA also believes that the home, the school, and the community each bear some responsibility for the health of all children and youth. This shared responsibility should provide:

- Comprehensive health education for all children and youth;[†]
- School curriculum and instruction related to good health and prevention of disease;
- Children and youth with the ability to make intelligent decisions that will develop and maintain good health habits;
- An awareness of individual, family, and community health needs; and
- Statewide health standards, accountability and testing.

The California State PTA believes that a strong, comprehensive program of health education taught by qualified personnel should be an integral part of the core school curriculum.

[†] PTA supports the right of a parent to be notified about any course of study regarding sex education and to review the curriculum materials to be used. PTA further supports the right of a parent/guardian to request in writing that his/her student be excused from such a course of study.

4.5.36 Homeless Families/Children

*Adopted July 1988 – Revised March 2005
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes:

- All children should have access to safe and affordable housing;
- Shelters should be provided for homeless families and their children regardless of age;
- Government agencies and private enterprise should be encouraged to offer education and retraining programs to help families develop the skills to secure employment that will enable the family to be self-sufficient; and
- Aid should be given to homeless families in securing low-cost housing in the community and in keeping the family intact.

PTAs should encourage city councils, county boards of supervisors, city and county housing authorities, local schools, county offices of education and other local agencies to cooperate in:

- Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to attend school;
- Developing and implementing programs and shelters for the homeless;

- Helping families to secure affordable housing; and
- Offering educational and retraining programs for homeless parents.

4.5.37 Human Relations[†]

*Adopted November 1968 – Revised March 2004
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes that good human relations must be an important force in working toward the prevention and solution of problems in communities. A high value must be placed on positive, interpersonal communication in which each person is treated with respect and appreciation, regardless of individual differences.

Typical interpersonal behaviors should reflect and support the following values (applicable without regard to differences in respect to rank, class, age, race, gender, disability, or sexual orientation): respect, courtesy/civility, appreciation, empathy, trust, inclusion and consultation.

The United States is a product of immigration and the cultural pluralism of its people. It consists of a multitude of diverse ethnic, racial and religious groups that share in common American citizenship, a democratic way of life and values which stress the worth and dignity of the individual.

The California State PTA welcomes diversity as an opportunity for teaching, developing and promoting multicultural competencies and understanding. Racial, ethnic, gender, sexual identity, disability, religious and other individual or group differences shall not be regarded as hindrances to success. Instead they shall be treated as positive opportunities for improving the quality of life.

The home and school are two of the strongest influences in shaping attitudes of children. All schools must be deeply involved with positive human relations in the education of the child. This concern, however, is not the job of the school alone; all interacting forces in the community must work together, so that each member of society has equal access to opportunities to develop to their full potential.

Human relations impact the future of family and community well-being. Success of individuals, families and communities depends on the type of human relations that are built. It is essential for PTA at every level to commit its efforts toward building an infrastructure that supports positive human relations in the healthy development of all children.

[†]See related position statement: Character Education (4.5.5).

4.5.38 Inclusiveness and Diversity[†]

*Adopted April 1991 – Revised January 1999
Member Services Commission*

The National Congress of Mothers, irrespective of creed, color or condition, stands for all parenthood, childhood, homehood.

*Alice McLellan Birney, 1898
Cofounder of National PTA*

Those words, true in 1898, are even more true today. PTAs everywhere must rededicate themselves to including parents and families of every background and circumstance.

California State PTA has a long history of caring about all children, and is aware of and sensitive to individual differences and abilities.

The California State PTA believes ever-changing demographics make it imperative for PTA, at every level, to:

- Become more aware of and sensitive to the needs of the diverse parent, student, and community population;
- Focus on fostering individual and intergroup respect, understanding and appreciation;
- Educate its leaders to the needs of the population that the PTA serves;
- Reflect the changing demographics and family structures on PTA boards and within its membership;
- Encourage that all PTA activities at the school be planned by a committee which is representative of the population; and
- Become acquainted with the leaders of the many diverse groups in the community and collaborate with them to increase parent, family and community involvement.

The California State PTA values and appreciates diversity, which enriches and strengthens the structure of our society within our state and nation.

[†]This position statement should be used in its entirety with no portion quoted out of context.

4.5.39 Instructional Materials

*Adopted May 1972 – Revised January 2003
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes instructional materials are fundamental to the educational program provided for California's youth. All students must have access to high-quality "Instructional materials" that complement curriculum implementation. Instructional materials are defined as those materials that have been through the process of adoption or approval at the state and/or local level, and include materials from all media—print, audio, film, video and electronic, manipulatives and other edu-

cational aids—with the adequate equipment and supplies for each instructional section.

The California State PTA believes

- The State of California must provide adequate annual resources to meet the costs of textbooks and other instructional materials for California students;
- The State Board of Education must provide a broad selection of adopted materials in each subject area that meets the needs of California's diverse community of learners;
- Approval or adoption of instructional materials by the State Board of Education must follow a schedule that allows local school districts adequate time to make choices of adopted or approved materials, have reviews by the public, and have timely distribution of materials to schools;
- Local school districts must be responsible for developmentally appropriate standards-based instructional materials;
- Local boards of education should adopt policies that encourage local community review of instructional materials;
- Local boards of education should adopt policies which encourage the participation of parents/guardians, teachers and members of the community on committees formed for the selection of instructional materials;
- Local boards of education should establish a policy to address challenges to instructional materials. The policy should include the establishment of a broad-based diverse community advisory committee to review challenged materials; and
- All materials provided should be in usable condition, in sufficient quantities, available at the beginning of each course of study, and at no cost to students or teachers.

4.5.40 Juvenile Offenders in the Justice System

*Adopted March 1987 – Revised March 2001
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA supports a juvenile justice system which emphasizes rehabilitation of juveniles and holds offenders accountable and responsible for their actions. Juvenile court jurisdiction over youth up to age 18 should be retained in any efforts to reform the juvenile justice system.

Juvenile court judges should retain and exercise their discretionary power to refer to adult court those youthful offenders charged with violent crimes as defined in California State Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 707 (covers the fitness of juveniles to be referred to adult court).

The California State PTA believes that parents may be held financially responsible for the actions of their children.

The juvenile justice system should provide for:

- Legal protections and safeguards for all juveniles alleged to have committed an offense, ensuring that the rights of crime victims and all interested parties are recognized and enforced;
- Equal treatment of all juveniles without regard to ethnicity or economic status;
- Anonymity of all juveniles alleged to have committed an offense and who remain under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court;
- Confidentiality of court proceedings and records with the stipulation that appropriate juvenile justice officials be required to disclose to law enforcement agencies and school districts the name of any juvenile criminal 14 years or older and who is convicted of a serious or violent crime;
- A program of rehabilitation which includes education, career training, employability and counseling with a component on victim/offender reconciliation;
- Involvement of victims in all aspects of the judicial and correctional system, including appearance at hearings, notification, allocation (right to speak) and restitution;
- A restitution system for victims;
- Alternatives to placement in correctional facilities;
- Community-based education and treatment programs (except for the serious, habitual or violent offenders) to ensure successful re-entry into the community;
- Confinement of juveniles committing offenses as described in section 602 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code when
 - Necessary to protect the offender or the person or property of another;
 - Necessary to ensure that the offender does not flee the jurisdiction of the court; or
 - The offender violates a specific condition of home release or parole; and
- Separation of status offenders (juveniles described in section 601 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code), and juvenile offenders (juveniles described in section 602 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code) from adult inmates when confinement is necessary.

4.5.41 Lead Poisoning

*Adopted May 1993 – Revised January 2005
Health Commission*

The California State PTA believes that early screening, identification, treatment, and prevention efforts are essential to protect all children from lead poisoning.

Children between the ages of six months and six years should be screened using a blood lead test.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood lead poisoning is a major, preventable pediatric health problem today, and it is entirely preventable.

The California State PTA recognizes:

- Lead poisoning is a pervasive illness affecting all segments of society;
- Children exposed to lead can have impaired intellectual development;
- The highest risk age for lead poisoning is between one and six years;
- Most children with lead poisoning do not look or act sick;
- The effects of lead in the blood stream are subtle and are often mistaken for some other health or learning problems; and
- Expectant mothers exposed to lead can miscarry or they may have babies with low birthweight and retarded growth and development.

The major sources of lead exposure in children are:

- Peeling or chipping paint and deteriorating lead paint particles in household dust,
- Lead contaminated soil,
- Some home-remedy[†] medicines,
- Contact with skin or clothing of parents in lead-related occupations or hobbies,
- Lead content in some imported food cans, cookware, and tableware, and
- Tap water, usually from older plumbing with lead-containing connectors.

The California State PTA urges parents and others responsible for the health and safety of children to:

- Educate themselves about measures they can employ to prevent lead poisoning
 - See that children have a well-balanced diet which includes iron and calcium;
 - Wash children’s hands often; especially after contact with anything suspected of containing lead; and
 - Keep areas around suspected lead contamination clean.
- Encourage schools and school districts to comply with the recommendations identified in the California Department of Health Services 1998 report, “Lead Hazards in California Public Elementary Schools and Child Care Facilities,” including
 - Compliance with state and federal mandates;

- Evaluation of the lead content of school drinking water at the outlet;
- Fencing off or covering bare soils adjacent to painted exterior walls of buildings constructed prior to 1940;
- Prioritization of deferred maintenance activities to classrooms that house the most vulnerable children;
- Utilization of the expertise of Department of Health Services certified lead-related construction personnel; and
- Adoption of and support for the voluntary Lead-safe Schools Program.

[†] e.g., Azarcon, Greta, Pay-loo-ah, Alkohl or Kohl.

4.5.42 Library Services

*Adopted May 1972 – Revised January 2005
Education Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes the significant contribution to educational enrichment that is provided by both school library/media centers and community (public) libraries. Both serve as centers for teaching many types of research skills as well as recreational purposes for children and adults.

School Library/Media Centers

School library/media centers implement and enhance the core curriculum and instructional program adopted by the school and, at the same time, provide for student enrichment and enjoyment. PTAs should work with schools/school districts to ensure that funding school library/media centers is given the priority necessary to maintain the level of services essential to each student’s educational experience.

The California State PTA believes that every school library/media center should:

- Be staffed by qualified credentialed personnel who
 - Select appropriate materials and provide activities that support the instructional program;
 - Assist students and staff to become effective users of ideas and information; and
 - Work closely with staff, students and the parent community;
- Meet the needs of all students by teaching the research skills necessary to obtain specific information; and
- Maintain and update print and non-print collections and/or have access to existing information through the use of various technologies.

The California State PTA believes that school library/media centers are important to student learning.

When budget cuts cause the elimination of full-time credentialed librarian positions, PTAs are encouraged to make every effort to work with their school districts to seek alternative solutions to keep library/media centers open for students' use.

Community (Public) Libraries

The California State PTA acknowledges the important role of community libraries. Community libraries supplement school library/media centers by providing broader services for students and by providing expanded opportunities for all children and adults to develop skills for life-long learning. PTAs should work to encourage every community to provide the necessary public and private funds for a total library service that will meet the needs of its population.

The California State PTA believes that to provide the highest quality services for all, community libraries should:

- Identify and make available a broad array of services which will meet the needs of the community and keep the community informed about available services;
- Maintain and update print and non-print collections that meet community needs;
- Provide access to information through the use of various technologies;
- Identify and meet special needs within the community by providing qualified staff and selected resources that address these needs;
- Provide programs to eliminate adult illiteracy; and
- Ensure equal access to all services of the library such as special programs for young readers and services for the physically disabled.[†]

[†] PTA is sensitive to the serious handicap to the person and family when an individual is unable to read. PTA actively supports school, community and library-based programs to eliminate adult illiteracy.

4.5.43 Mass Media and the Family

*Adopted May 1974 – Revised May 2006
Communications Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that the mass media exert a powerful influence on American life and make a major impact on the education of children and youth in our culture. Mass media includes but is not limited to motion pictures, radio, television, digital video discs, video and audio cassette tapes, compact discs and records, computer/computer disc software, internet websites, video games, books, newspapers, magazines, and other printed matter.

PTA respects the rights of adults to choose their own entertainment and educational fare. However, since young minds are easily influenced, PTA believes that producers of mass media have a responsibility to consider how media messages, images and experiences

affect children and youth. PTA encourages such responsibility among producers of mass media and advocates for technological tools and other options for parents to use to control their children's exposure to material parents may find inappropriate for their children.

The California State PTA believes parents and the mass media each have a responsibility to provide positive experiences that enrich the lives of children and youth.

The California State PTA encourages parents to:

- Guide their children in the choice of media products when selecting material for viewing, listening, reading, or entertainment;
- Teach their children how to evaluate what they see and hear;
- Be aware there are federal, state and local laws prohibiting the sale and distribution of obscene and/or pornographic materials to minors, and to inform the proper authorities when it appears these laws are being violated; and
- Be knowledgeable about the availability of, and have the skills to use, tools to restrict access to media they find inappropriate for their children.

The California State PTA believes parents and the mass media each have a responsibility to provide positive experiences which enrich the lives of children and youth.

4.5.44 Mental Health

*Adopted January 1968 – Revised May 2004
Health Commission*

The California State PTA believes that greater awareness is needed in understanding the issues concerning mental and emotional health.

The California State PTA further believes that the support of community programs, which are developed under the direction of trained professionals, present an opportunity for all citizens to become informed and educated about the care and support of those who become mentally ill and/or emotionally ill.

The California State PTA supports efforts to:

- Promote and encourage an appreciation of the dignity and individuality of all human beings;
- Provide information and education for maintaining mental and emotional health;
- Assist in developing awareness, providing information and education in the understanding of mental and emotional illness;
- Encourage cooperation and collaboration between mental health agencies and other community agencies and programs to provide mental health and support services for mentally ill and/or emotionally ill individuals and their families within their own communities;

- Secure appropriate support services, educational programs and treatment facilities for mentally ill and/or emotionally ill individuals and their families in both urban and rural communities;
- Support legislation to maintain and strengthen mental health and support services for mentally ill and/or emotionally ill individuals and their families;
- Ensure that parents are fully informed of all aspects of treatment, and their options, including side effects of medications;
- Encourage positive public attitudes toward and the compassionate treatment of mentally and emotionally ill persons; and
- Support research that seeks early detection, diagnosis of and treatment for mental and emotional illness.
- Programs to assist runaway and homeless youth and their families, including programs to temporarily provide safe shelters while families and/or appropriate agencies are contacted;
- Legislation that would provide more stringent punishment for murderers of children and for perpetrators of serious and repeated physical, mental and sexual abuse crimes against children; and
- Adequate funding for missing children programs and national missing and exploited children centers/clearinghouses;
- Legislation to require that the school records of missing children who had been attending school are appropriately marked in case another school requests that child's cumulative folder;

By engaging in these activities, PTA can help dispel apathy, misinformation, and ignorance surrounding mental and emotional illness. By supporting these actions, PTA can help assure that all individuals have the best possible opportunity to make their own unique contribution to society.

4.5.45 Missing and Exploited Children

*Adopted March 1986 – Revised October 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes PTA, as an advocate for children, has the responsibility to work with schools as well as social and government agencies to support:

- The ongoing operation of a state clearinghouse to serve as a missing children information center which would tie into the National Crime Information Center;
- The maintenance of the California Violent Crime Information Center to assist in the identification and the apprehension of persons responsible for the disappearance and exploitation of children, plus an automated computer system for response to reports of missing children;
- The establishment of the Missing and Exploited Children's Recovery Network consisting of an automated system to transmit to law enforcement agencies and cooperating news media services specific information on children, in cooperation with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children;
- Requiring local law enforcement agencies to make immediate assessment of steps needed to locate minors and, within 24 hours, file report(s) with clearinghouses and other agencies as may be appropriate;
- Establishment of a statewide computer system to provide multi-jurisdictional coordination;
- Establishment of a program to identify and locate missing children that would provide for participation, as necessary, of California public and private schools;

- Establishment of uniform school district policies statewide that would require appropriate school personnel to immediately contact law enforcement when they believe a child to be missing and report any suspected missing child in attendance at school to law enforcement as is required in cases of suspected child abuse;
- Encouraging elementary schools to offer age appropriate child abduction prevention curriculum to children and to their parents;
- The display of posters or pictures of currently missing children in an area within each school accessible to school personnel only;
- Ensuring the reintegration of long term missing children who have been located back into the school system;
- Legislation to secure the safety of the school facility;
- Legislation to require school districts to assure that any contractors and contractors' employees have passed a criminal background check before those individuals enter a school site when children are present.

4.5.46 Nutrition Education

*Adopted May 1974 – Revised January 2005
Health Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that adequate nutrition is a key component necessary for the optimum physical, behavioral, and intellectual development of each individual. Healthy eating habits and an active lifestyle increase resistance to communicable disease and reduce the risk of chronic disease, developmental disabilities, eating disorders, and infant mortality. The California State PTA therefore believes all individuals should have access to information regarding adequate nutrition.

Nutrition education is critical to the school curriculum as noted by the increasing problem of obesity in our chil-

dren. The California State PTA believes it is important to promote healthy lifestyles and positive changes in attitude for future generations.

It is important that children be taught the relationship between good nutrition and good personal health so that they learn to choose foods that foster a lifetime of healthful eating habits. It is equally important that parents and children have access to the most up-to-date, scientifically-based nutrition information available.

The California State PTA believes that students, staff, parents, and the community can benefit from an understanding of the importance of good nutrition education by encouraging and supporting:

- Teacher training on comprehensive nutrition education;
- Comprehensive nutrition education curriculum that provides students with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to make wise food choices throughout their lives;
- Programs that provide nutrition education for parents and the community;
- The recommended daily nutritional guidelines of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA);
- School districts to make maximum use of state and federal funds available for food service programs so that all children may have access to nutritious meals; and
- Collaborative efforts to support nutrition education.

4.5.47 Parenting Education

*Adopted May 1987 – Revised May 2004
Parent Involvement Commission*

The California State PTA believes:

- The family is the basic unit of society and recognizes that there are many different family compositions and life styles;
- Parenting is one of the most challenging tasks and one for which there is often little or no preparation;
- Parents and all other adults responsible for the nurturing of children should be prepared to constructively influence the development of children in their care;
- Students have a right to receive education in parenting skills to prepare themselves for parenthood; and
- Ongoing training in parenting skills should be offered through parent education programs and other resources in the community.

Parenting education should include:

- The current knowledge about the physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects of child development from birth through adolescence;

- Training in life skills: goal setting, decision-making, responsibility, assertiveness, and recognizing the consequences of choices;
- Roles and responsibilities necessary for a well-functioning family;
- Strategies for enhancing each family member's self-esteem; and
- Current information about the changing family.

PTA has a responsibility to:

- Offer parenting education programs/information to its members and the community at large;
- Encourage schools to provide parenting skills education to students;
- Promote parent participation in the planning and evaluation of parenting skills education;
- Support teacher training programs in parenting skills education; and
- Collaborate with other state and local parenting programs to make parenting resources available to the maximum number of families.

4.5.48 Physical Education (K-12)

*Adopted May 1993 – Reaffirmed March 2004
Health Commission*

The California State PTA believes a quality physical education program that operates cooperatively within a school's comprehensive health program is essential to the well-being of the youth of California.

Parents and teachers should educate children and youth to prepare them to participate throughout life in appropriate physical activities.

PTA believes that:

- Good health is basic to education and physical education is basic to good health;
- A certified teacher, trained and educated in physical education, should be the educator at all school sites;
- The goal of physical education should be to promote lifelong fitness habits in all students; and
- All students must be treated equally in an integrated physical education class, as required by state law.

The California State PTA believes a good physical education program promotes self-discipline by teaching children to take control of their lives and to be responsible for their own health and fitness.

4.5.49 Prevention and Intervention Programs

*Adopted January 1995 – Revised March 2005
Health, Community Concerns and
Parent Involvement Commissions*

The California State PTA believes in the importance of preventing and eliminating factors that may be detrimental to the health, safety and well-being of all children and youth.

Recognizing that any circumstance that interferes with a child's potential to become a healthy, educated, productive citizen places that child at risk, the California State PTA believes prevention and intervention programs are vital. Early intervention programs are needed to end the escalating patterns of alienation, which often lead to anti-social and criminal behavior. Prevention and intervention programs must include the areas of physical health, mental health and be designed to enable children and youth to become productive citizens in their communities.

The California State PTA further believes that collaboration must occur between the school, health, social services, and other community agencies to design and provide intervention and prevention/support programs for youth. Such programs may include strategies that will:

- Enhance self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Emphasize disease prevention, immunization, visual screening, auditory testing and dental care;
- Educate youth on proper nutrition, appropriate prenatal care, and the dangers of drug, tobacco, and alcohol use;
- Provide mental health counseling, and where appropriate, mentoring;
- Strengthen and expand alternative education programs;
- Provide life skills education including parenting and vocational training; and
- Provide positive age appropriate recreational, social, and cultural activities in the community before and after school hours and on weekends.

The California State PTA believes that children and youth must be given every opportunity to reach their full potential. The California State PTA further believes that concerned individuals, agencies, and organizations must join together to address the needs of all children and youth. Together, families, schools, and communities can effectively strengthen and enhance the maturation of our children, resulting in emotionally secure, healthy, and socially responsible adults.

4.5.50 Prevention of Teen Pregnancy†

*Adopted January 1998 – Revised January 2007
Health Commission*

The California State PTA believes parents/guardians should take primary responsibility for teaching life skills that contribute to adolescent well-being: goal setting, decision-making, responsibility, assertiveness and recognizing the consequences of choices.

The California State PTA supports Comprehensive School Health Programs that address the needs of young people in a systematic, integrated way. Appropriate and adequate Comprehensive School Health Programs include abstinence and pregnancy/disease prevention, education related to information about emotional and physical development, family life education and communication, critical thinking, and decision-making skills.

Studies show that parenthood during adolescence usually results in interrupted education, inadequate job skills, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate parenting skills. Further research has proven that adolescents who receive an appropriate and adequate family life education become sexually active at later ages than those who are deprived of this curriculum.

The California State PTA urges its units, councils and districts to work for developmentally appropriate family life education within the context of a comprehensive health education curriculum which shall include but is not limited to:

- Components on sexual abstinence, pregnancy prevention and personal responsibility;
- The risks and consequences associated with sexual activity; and
- The increased health and emotional risks of adolescent pregnancy for mothers, fathers and babies.

4.5.51 Public Involvement in School Governance

*Adopted January 2003
Legislation Commission*

The California State PTA believes in democratic principles of government and that, as part of the established democratic process, any governance system must include checks and balances between the executive, legislative and judicial systems. Citizens must maintain and exercise the right to vote for those who govern them. The officials they elect should be directly responsible and accountable to their constituents. Every citizen should be encouraged to give input to their elected officials, state agencies, and local governing boards for the improvement of services. The California State PTA believes these principles of governance are essential to a well functioning and effective public education system so vital to a thriving democracy.

The California State Constitution, Article IX, sets forth the framework for California's public education system, including the election of a state superintendent of public instruction. Clear definition of responsibilities for each part of the school governance system is necessary for this structure to function smoothly.

The California State PTA believes that the roles and responsibilities of each component in the state's education governance structure must be clearly defined, compatible, and not overlapping or contradictory.

- The elected Governor is responsible for producing the total State Budget, including education.
- The elected Superintendent must have responsibility for the fiscal and programmatic implementation of the education program. To assign these responsibilities to appointed persons is to disenfranchise the public from the policy making process.
- The State Board of Education, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate, must reflect the demographics of the state and include representation of stakeholders, including parents. The California State PTA believes the role of the State Board of Education should be to advise the Superintendent of Public Instruction and to serve as a conduit for public input to education matters at the state level.

The California State PTA believes that input from members of the public is essential in education policy making at all levels of governance—state, county, and local school district.

The California State PTA believes in local control of educational decisions when it is in the best interests of students to make these decisions locally. Local school districts should have the flexibility to meet the needs of their student populations. Local governing boards should focus on policies and planning and should allow superintendents full authority to manage the schools in their districts.

The California State PTA further believes that County Offices of Education, as established in the California State Constitution, have an important role in providing services and oversight for local school districts, and in some instances direct control of local schools. The roles and responsibilities of members of County Boards of Education, whether elected or appointed, must also be clearly defined as programmatic and fiscal implementation, or advisory.

Both appointed members of the State Board of Education and locally elected or appointed governing board members must be qualified by either experience or training for their roles and be required to participate in ongoing professional development.

The California State PTA strongly believes it is the responsibility of parents and community members to provide necessary input for effective decision-making at the local and state levels. The public is responsible for electing local school board members, for monitoring

actions of the State Board of Education, and for holding both elected and appointed officials accountable for the decisions they make while fulfilling their established roles and responsibilities.

4.5.52 Public School Employer-Employee Negotiations

*Adopted March 1974 – Revised March 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that public school employer-employee collective bargaining is mandated by law and that negotiations greatly influence education. As mandated by law, the bargaining parties are required to make public their positions. These details must be provided to the public at the beginning of the process. PTA has the responsibility to become knowledgeable and to inform the public about the proposed contract and any proposed changes through the negotiations. As PTA is an organization whose membership is composed of parents, teachers, students, school district employees, school board members and concerned community members. PTA must remain neutral in a dispute arising from school employer-employee negotiations.

The California State PTA believes:

- All school employees are entitled to the benefits of fair employment practices including due process, optimum working conditions and adequate salaries and benefits;
- Locally-elected school boards, as representatives of the people, have legal responsibility for decision-making;
- Local school boards and school employee organizations should be accountable to the public for the terms of the contract and the fiscal impact on the instructional program; and
- Full disclosure of the final contract should be made available to the public and fiscal impact of the contract should be discussed at a public hearing before the final vote of the school board.

The California State PTA supports:

- The adoption of policies by local school boards that provide full opportunity for the public to express its views on the issues to be negotiated; and
- The right of school employees, through their organizations, to meet and negotiate in good faith with public school employers to reach written agreement on those matters within the scope of bargaining[†] according to state law. (Included in scope is the requirement that the local district peer assistance review process will be negotiated in the contract according to AB 2X, Statutes of 1999.)

The PTA has a responsibility to:

- Study and become informed early in the process about the proposed contracts and the fiscal implications and to analyze the effect on the students and the programs in the district;
- Inform all parties if any issue being negotiated either is consistent with or differs with adopted California State PTA position statements;
- Encourage all parties to work cooperatively to develop procedures to ensure that classrooms and students are not used for propaganda purposes;
- Remain neutral in the event of a dispute^{††};
- Continue with normal PTA activities in the event of a dispute; and
- Inform parents and community members about proposed contracts and encourage other school-based and community organizations to study proposed contracts.

(The above statement is a policy of the PTA as an organization, and is in no way intended as an infringement on the activities of its members acting as individuals.)

† Scope of bargaining - The law defines “scope,” as a broad range of issues and subjects that either party may or may not introduce for negotiation. Scope is a crucial, dynamic, and frequently litigated area.

†† Dispute - a verbal controversy, a controversy, a debate, or quarrel on any issue under discussion.

4.5.52a COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The following “walks” PTA leadership through the collective bargaining process and further provides a step-by-step guide for appropriate PTA activities.

4.5.52b A CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS ON THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

What role can your PTA/PTSA assume when your local school board and teachers begin to negotiate a contract?

The most important thing your unit, council or district PTA can do is advocate for all children. The members can do this by:

- Studying the contract proposals and analyzing the effect on the students in the district.
- Asking the local school board and the local bargaining units: “What effect will this proposed contract have on all children?”
- Working with all education stakeholders to secure adequate school funding.

The PTA does not advocate the inclusion or exclusion of certain items in the proposed contract. However, PTA members should be knowledgeable and aware of the effects of the proposed contract provisions on students.

Some questions PTA members should ask include

- Are the implications of the provisions upon the budget/financial resources of the school district understood by all negotiators and the community?
- If a contract dispute should arise, would an arbitrator’s interpretation of a provision have an adverse effect on the best interests of students?
- How will this proposed contract affect other school district employees?
- If the language of a provision is unclear, what is its history? Ask questions from both sides.

PTA unit/council/district PTAs should be aware of the progress of the negotiations, should publicize proposed changes as they are announced, and should give input appropriately to ensure all contract provisions place the interests of the students first.

A check list of items all parents should keep in mind when studying the contract proposals:

Guidelines for Class Size

- Does the contract allow
 - adequate student/teacher ratio for individual instruction?
 - adjustments to meet unanticipated needs?
 - flexibility for needed curriculum adjustments or needed education innovations?

Maintenance of Standards

- Does the contract allow
 - new programs and changes in scheduling and curriculum offerings to occur during the contract period?

Workday and Workload

- Does the contract make provisions for
 - assistance to students before and after classroom hours?
 - staff development and orientation opportunities?
 - staff attendance at evening meetings and student activities?
 - lesson preparation time for appropriate personnel?
 - flexibility to allow for creative and innovative strategies in the classroom?
 - a definition of professional duties?

Conference Time

- Does the contract permit and encourage
 - reasonable periods of time for teachers and administrators to confer with parents and students at hours convenient for working parents?
 - reasonable periods of time for meetings among school staff to promote collegiality and better understanding of students’ needs?

Extracurricular Activities

- Does the contract provide
 - stipends or incentives for supervision of students participating in extracurricular activities such as sport, drama, music, school newspapers, etc.?

Release Time for Teachers

Does the contract provide

-unpaid leave for teachers who wish to improve their teaching skills?

-adequate classroom supervision by certificated personnel when the regularly scheduled teacher is absent from the classroom?

4.5.52c GUIDELINES FOR PTAs REGARDING PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE NEGOTIATIONS

The California State PTA strongly urges all unit, council and district PTAs to closely monitor their respective school boards' compliance with the Public Notice section of the Employer-Employee Relations Act. Unless a PTA does so, it will jeopardize its ability to make meaningful, timely comments about the initial and subsequent proposals under negotiation.

Contract Study Committee

PTA has a responsibility to become knowledgeable and to inform the public about proposed contracts. To fulfill this responsibility, the following steps should be taken:

1. Form a PTA study committee including representation from all PTA units within the school district. School district employees should not serve on this study committee because they have the opportunity to express their views through their respective bargaining units.

Please Note: Where a council or district PTA relates directly to a school district, the said council or district PTA should appoint the study committee. Where a group of units or councils relates to a school district, the units or councils should appoint members to serve on a study committee.

2. The PTA criterion for any study, including collective bargaining issues, must be, "WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECT ON ALL CHILDREN?"

3. Encourage other school-based and community organizations to make their own studies of the proposed contract(s).

4. Study the current contract, the school district budget, initial contract proposals and subsequent proposals from the school board and employees' organization.

a. Adequate lead time is essential for any group beginning to study collective bargaining proposals since several key documents should be reviewed first. The committee must react to contract issues from a position of knowledge about the current fiscal condition of the school district, and how the current agreement affects the education of students.

b. Documents to be studied:

(1) THE BUDGET — A thorough briefing on the current year's budget is essential to understand a school district's financial condition and how funds are being allocated. This information should be presented by school district financial staff members in a clearly understandable format. (See Resource List, EdSource.)

(2) THE CURRENT CONTRACT — Almost all school districts have an existing contract with each employee bargaining unit. While it may seem to be a complex task, it is important that time be allowed for the committee to become familiar with and knowledgeable about the current contract language. Particular attention should be paid to the interests of parents and students in the current contract.

(3) INITIAL CONTRACT PROPOSALS — When each bargaining unit's new contract is to be negotiated, the initial proposals should be obtained from the employee group and the school district. Representatives from management and the employee groups should be invited to give their

Employer-Employee Relations Act Article 8. Public Notice

3547. Public meetings; public records

(a) All initial proposals of exclusive representatives and of public school employers, which relate to matters within the scope of representation, shall be presented at a public meeting of the public school employer and thereafter shall be public records.

(b) Meeting and negotiating shall not take place on any proposal until a reasonable time has elapsed after the submission of the proposal to enable the public to become informed and the public has the opportunity to express itself regarding the proposal at a meeting of the public school employer.

(c) After the public has had the opportunity to express itself, the public school employer shall, at a meeting which is open to the public, adopt its initial proposal.

(d) New subjects of meeting and negotiating arising after the presentation of initial proposals shall be made public within 24 hours. If a vote is taken on such subject by the public school employer, the vote thereon by each member shall also be made public within 24 hours.

(e) The board may adopt regulations for the purpose of implementing this section, which are consistent with the intent of the section; namely that the public be informed of the issues that are being negotiated upon and have full opportunity to express their views on the issues to the public school employer, and to know of the positions of their elected representatives.

California Government Code (as of January 1990)

interpretations of the proposals. The language should be clear in its intent and the committee should ask, "WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECT ON ALL CHILDREN?"

The school board must allow time for the community to study and then comment on the board's initial proposals before adopting them as the board's negotiating position. The PTA should find out what the school board's time frame is for this process.

- (4) **SUBSEQUENT PROPOSALS** — The study committee should continue to monitor the negotiating process for the introduction of new subjects arising after the presentation of initial proposals. These subsequent proposals must be made public within 24 hours after their introduction.
- 5. If any questions or concerns arise from the study of the initial or subsequent proposals, those questions or concerns should be communicated to the group that originated those proposals.
- 6. Report results of the study with any recommended action(s) to the PTA membership. Recommendations might include comments to be made to the school board and/or comments to be made to the bargaining unit. Such comments must be made within the framework of California State PTA policies and positions.
- 7. Follow the reporting and communicating procedures through the negotiations process.
- 8. Study information published by your local media.

4.5.52d THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

Current law requires the following:

Before a public school employer enters into a written agreement with an exclusive representative covering matters within the scope of representation, the major provisions of the agreement, including, but not limited to, the costs that would be incurred by the public school employer under the agreement for the current and subsequent fiscal years, shall be disclosed at a public meeting of the public school employer in a format established for this purpose by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

California Government Code Section 3547.5

One of the recommendations from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to school boards for implementation of this law is that the board:

Make available to the public a copy of the proposed agreement prior to the day of the public meeting; the number of days the agreement should be made available to the public is determined locally.

The California State PTA strongly recommends that unit, council and district PTAs request their respective school boards to adopt a policy that includes a minimum of ten days as the "number of days the agreement should be made available to the public. . . ." The policy also should

require the board to set time aside for public comment before entering into the written agreement.

The California State PTA urges unit, council and district PTAs to study the proposed agreement and make appropriate comments. Such comments must be made within the framework of California State PTA policies and positions.

4.5.52e SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL BOARD, SUPERINTENDENT AND BARGAINING UNIT PRESIDENT

ORGANIZATION TITLE AND ADDRESS
(May be home address of PTA president)

Date

TO: _____, President,
Board of Trustees
_____ School District
_____ President, _____ Association

FROM: _____ PTA (Council or District PTA)
President

SUBJECT: Negotiation

The _____ PTA has carefully reviewed the California State PTA's *Toolkit* information on negotiations. _____ PTA will follow these guidelines. Accordingly, we shall remain neutral during negotiations. We recognize that at times negotiations can be very difficult and time consuming for the school district and the employee association. We know you can appreciate the awkward situation labor negotiations can create for PTA president and PTA executive board members. To ensure compliance with the California State PTA policy of neutrality, PTA members will not attend separate meetings with either school district or employee association representatives. It would be appropriate for PTA to invite the school district superintendent or representative, a representative of the district employee association to discuss negotiations at a PTA board association meeting, but both sides must be represented at that time. PTA will not distribute information provided by either side, but may choose to distribute information PTA has prepared. The _____ PTA will continue its regularly scheduled meeting on the school or district sites, and its regular schedule of volunteer programs.

If you have any questions, I'd be happy to discuss our position of neutrality or any of the above-mentioned matters with you.

Sincerely,

PTA President (Council or District PTA)

4.5.52f PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS

When local school boards and employee groups meet at the negotiating table, the decisions made are of great importance to the quality of education provided for students. Parents and concerned community members have realized that negotiations by school employee groups such as those representing teachers, school office personnel, aides, custodians and cafeteria personnel greatly influence events in the classroom and have an impact on the overall cost of education.

It is essential that public input into this process be based on knowledge of the operations of the local school district. It is only in this way the public can become a valid part of the process and present viewpoints pertinent to the current contract or proposals, while consistently advocating positions that support a high standard of education for students in the classroom.

The California State PTA has prepared this paper to assist its membership to better understand the dynamic role collective bargaining plays in education.

I. What Is Collective Bargaining?*

Collective bargaining is a labor relations process developed in the private sector which recognizes the historical conflict between management interests such as profits and the interests of workers such as salaries and working conditions. In the collective bargaining process, the representatives of labor and management present each other with demands—proposals—and proceed to compromise their divergent viewpoints—negotiate—until a written settlement—contract—is reached. Traditionally, private sector negotiations are conducted in private meetings of the two parties and often lead to an adversarial relationship.

II. Why Is There Collective Bargaining In Public Education?

The momentum for collective bargaining in public education increased during the late 1960s as teachers and other school employees felt they could not achieve desired economic benefits and acceptable working conditions as long as school boards, represented by superintendents, retained unilateral decision-making authority on these issues. More than 40 states now have collective bargaining laws.

III. What Is The Education Employment Relations Act?

The EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ACT (EERA) provides that negotiations "shall" occur between school boards and their employee groups and negotiations "shall" be limited in scope to matters relating to wages, hours of employment, and other terms and conditions of employment. The process for establishing collective bargaining was initially spelled out in Senate Bill 160, the Educational Employment Relations Act of 1976 authored by Senator Al Rodda.

*Refer to 4.5.52g Contents of a Typical Teachers Contract and 4.5.52h GLOSSARY on collective bargaining terminology.

There are also subjects upon which the employer is only required to consult with the employee organization, e.g., definition of educational objectives, determination of course content and curriculum, and selection of textbooks. The school board may expand these topics as it wishes although none of the items for consultation has to be included in the contract.

In reality, however, the exact definition of scope is unclear and is one of the most controversial areas in negotiations. A regulatory body established by EERA—the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB)—is constantly called upon to settle disputes dealing with scope as well as carry out the many other duties with which the PERB has been charged.

IV. How Does Collective Bargaining Affect Education?

The negotiated contract becomes the instrument for school district governance on each provision that has been negotiated into the signed contract. Therefore, the contract has potential implications for everything which occurs in the classrooms of that school district since issues dealing with class size, hours of employment, teacher transfer policies, procedures for employee evaluation as well as wages and fringe benefits all have an impact on the quality of education.

V. Why Should The Public Be Involved?

The community has a high stake in its public education system and, therefore, should be equally concerned about the negotiations which result in the final contract. While negotiations are usually conducted in private meetings between representatives of the school district and the employee group, the public must study the issues, evaluate their impact on the educational system, and know how the collective bargaining process works and how the public can fit into the process.

If a representative system of government such as ours—one in which school boards are elected to represent the public viewpoint—is to work, people must have the ability to:

1. Elect their representatives;
2. Influence those they elect;
3. Hold those officials accountable.

VI. How is the Public Provided For in EERA?

When EERA was passed, it included a very important section which provides for public access to the collective bargaining process. Called the "sunshine" clause, it mandates that all initial proposals of any contract negotiations between the employee group and the school district shall be presented at a public meeting of the board of education and that a "reasonable" time shall elapse to allow for public input before negotiations start. Since PERB has mandated all boards of education adopt a public notice policy, PTA members should become knowledgeable about their school district public notice policy and ensure that it specifies:

1. How the district will make the public aware of the issues;
2. When the public can speak to each set of proposals;
3. How the public may speak to the issues.

VII. How Does the Public Speak to the Issues?

According to EERA, any person or representative group may comment on the issues to be negotiated or on the contract itself at any meeting of the board of education. The PTA does not advocate the inclusion or exclusion of certain clauses in the contract. PTA members should ask, however, that each clause be analyzed to determine "WHAT EFFECT THIS WILL HAVE ON ALL CHILDREN."

When feasible, PTA involvement in the collective bargaining process should be through a Public Notice Sunshine Committee. This approach will allow the PTA organization to maintain its neutral position regarding any dispute(s) that may arise, and will preclude offending any one segment of PTA membership.

4.5.52g CONTENTS OF A TYPICAL TEACHERS CONTRACT
(EdSource, March 1999)

Compensation: cost-of-living adjustment, salary schedule, pay for specific duties (department chair, coach), minimum teacher salaries; expenses, travel reimbursement, tuition reimbursement; mentor teacher selection process

Benefits: health and welfare premiums, specific plans offered, retiree benefits

Hours: length of work day, school year, student year, calendar (holidays, vacations), minimum days, preparation periods, lunch

Leaves: bereavement, pregnancy, child rearing, religious, sick leave, disability, sabbatical, personal need/necessity, jury duty, military, industrial accident/illness, catastrophic illness

Retirement: early retirement, benefits

Nondiscrimination Job Assignment: assignment, promotion, transfer, reassignment

Class size and case loads: pupils per teacher, students per counselor, number of teaching periods, instructional aides

Safety Conditions

Evaluation: procedures and remediation

Grievance: procedures, appeal process, mediation, arbitration

Discipline: procedures and criteria

Layoff and Reemployment

Organizational Security: payroll deduction of union

dues ("agency fee"), maintenance of membership, fair share fees, union rights

Work Stoppage: "no-strikes" clause

Contract: duration, reopeners

Savings Clause: contract in effect if portion invalidated by court, Legislature

Management Rights

Consultation: topics, procedures

4.5.52h GLOSSARY

* AGENCY SHOP – A requirement, usually contained in a negotiated agreement, that all employees in a bargaining entity pay a fee, (often called a "fair share" or "service" fee) covering the cost of representation to the employee organization which is the exclusive representative of the entity.

* AGREEMENT – A written negotiated contract between the employer and the recognized exclusive representative of employees in a bargaining entity that sets out conditions of employment (wages, hours, fringe benefits, etc.) for a stated period of time. Often contains a procedure for settling grievances over interpretation or application of the agreement and may include terms governing the parties' relationship. Under EERA, an agreement, which may be for a period of no more than three years, becomes binding when accepted by both parties. PERB has no authority to enforce agreements.

* ARBITRATION – A method of resolving disputes between an employer and employee organization by submitting the dispute to a neutral third party (or tripartite panel) whose decision may be binding or merely advisory.

* CERTIFICATED EMPLOYEE – A school employee who is qualified by a certificate or credential to perform a particular educational service, such as classroom teacher, counselor and psychologist, as defined in Education Code.

*** CFIER – The California Foundation for Improvement of Employer-Employee Relations. The organization is committed to "building and maintaining effective labor-management relationships of partnerships." Its activities include training programs in negotiations and problem-solving, neutral facilitation services, skill-building workshops and conferences, consultation, research and development, and long-term support service.

* CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE – A school employee in a position not requiring a certificate or credential, such as teachers' aides or clerical, custodial or food service employees.

* EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ACT (EERA) – The process for establishing collective bargaining. Enacted in 1975 as Senate Bill 160 (Rodda), Chapter 961, Laws of 1975 and subsequent amendments.

* **FACT-FINDING** – The method of impasse resolution, usually advisory, that involves investigation of a bargaining dispute by a neutral third party, or tripartite panel that reports the results to the parties, usually with recommendations for settling the dispute. Under EERA, the parties may request that their dispute be submitted to fact-finding (under specified procedures) if a mediator is unable to settle the controversy within 15 days and the mediator declares that fact-finding is appropriate.

* **GOOD FAITH BARGAINING** – Broadly defined as the duty of the parties to meet and negotiate at reasonable times with willingness to reach agreement on matters within the scope of representation; however, neither party is required to make a concession or agree to any proposal.

** **GRIEVANCE** – A means of settling disputes which arise from the interpretation or application of the existing contract. When disagreements cannot be settled at one of the lower levels of the grievance procedure the exclusive bargaining agent may take the disagreement to arbitration. Arbitration can be binding or advisory depending on the wording of the contract.

** **IMPASSE** – A deadlock or stalemate in bargaining declared by one or both parties. Declaration of impasse usually begins the implementation of impasse procedures (mediation or fact finding), and once these procedures have been exhausted can allow for unilateral action by the employer.

** **INITIAL PROPOSAL** – A written offer for consideration made by the exclusive representative or the school district as part of the bargaining process for the next agreement. The EERA lists those items which are within the scope of representation and are the subject of mandatory bargaining.

*** **INTEREST-BASED BARGAINING** – A more cooperative method for reaching agreement about the critical aspects of employer-employee relationships. Negotiations are based on mutual interests rather than on individual positions.

* **MEDIATION** – Also called conciliation. Efforts of a neutral third party to help resolve a dispute (usually involving contract negotiations) between an employer and employee organization. The mediator normally has no power to impose a settlement. Under EERA, mediation is the first step in the impasse resolution procedure.

* **NEGOTIATIONS** – The process of the employer and the exclusive representative meeting together and bargaining in a good faith effort to reach agreement on matters within the scope of representation and executing, if requested by either party, an agreement incorporating matters agreed on.

* **PERB** – The Public Employment Relations Board is charged with administering and enforcing EERA. Among its many functions are investigating and deciding “unfair practice” charges or other claims that the act has been violated, establishing or approving bargaining entities, conducting representation elections, and seeking court

enforcement of its orders and decisions as it deems necessary.

** **PUBLIC NOTICE** – The public notice section of EERA is intended to give the public an opportunity to present its views. Initial bargaining proposals of both the exclusive representative and the district must be presented at a public meeting of the school board and are public records. Negotiations will be delayed a reasonable time for the public to comment.

Unless the parties agree otherwise, laws requiring open meetings do not apply to meetings and discussions between parties; with mediators, arbitrators, or fact-finding panels; and executive sessions of the school board on negotiations.

If both parties agree, any phrase of negotiations may be conducted publicly, or observers may be invited. Typically, the school board and union announce their opening positions and then talk privately. Although any meeting of three or more school board members must be open to the public, EERA specifically permits private meetings between the school board and its negotiator.

* **SCOPE OF BARGAINING** – The law defines “scope,” as a broad range of issues and subjects that either party may or may not introduce for negotiation. Scope is a crucial, dynamic, and frequently litigated area.

* **SICKOUT** – A job action involving a number of employees failing to report to work on the same day and claiming to be sick.

** **SLOWDOWN** – A job action involving a number of employees working at less than normal efficiency.

* **STRIKE** – A work stoppage. Employees acting together in refusing to work in order to gain a bargaining concession or to persuade the employer to take certain action. Usually occurs when negotiations on a new agreement reach impasse and lasts until settlement on a new agreement is reached, but may be called for a shorter period as a pressure tactic or to protest employer actions. Usually conducted under leadership of the employee organization, following a vote among members. A “wildcat” strike is a walkout by employees without authorization of the organization. A “rolling” or “yo-yo” strike involves several intermittent walkouts of short duration interspersed among days when employees report to work.

* **SUNSHINE LAW** – A requirement that bargaining proposals or other aspects of public employee bargaining be made public. Under EERA, initial proposals as well as new topics that arise during negotiations must be made available to the public.

* Pocket Guide to the Educational Employment Relations Act, California Public Employee Relations, September 1997

** California Teachers Association Collective Bargaining Handbook

*** Collective Bargaining, 1999, EdSource, 520 San Antonio Road, Suite 200, Mountain View, CA 94040-1217; 650.917.9481; www.edsource.org

4.5.52i RESOURCES

California State PTA Vice President for Education – 916.440.1985 ext. 305

Selected Readings on California School Finance, EdSource, 520 San Antonio Road, Suite 200, Mountain View, CA 94040-1217; 650.917.9481; www.edsource.org

Pocket Guide To The Employer-Employee Relations Act (Fifth Edition, September 1997), California Public Employee Relations Program, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-5555; 510.643.7092

County Office of Education (Office of Employee Relations)

Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) 916.322.3198

California State PTA Toolkit, position statement, “Public School Employer-Employee Negotiations”

4.5.52j PTA ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE DISPUTES

Public school employer-employee negotiations and/or disputes and disputes between bargaining units are very much a part of the reality of operating public schools. THE PTA MUST REMAIN NEUTRAL* and MUST refrain from taking sides in all disputes. It is a PTA responsibility to provide opportunities for public understanding of disputed issues through sponsoring public meetings where all sides may present their views.

PTA speaks as an advocate for children and youth. It is a PTA responsibility to urge school board members, school district employees and negotiators on all sides to make the welfare of the students the first and ultimate consideration in all negotiations. PTAs must do this within the framework of California State PTA policies.

(These two paragraphs must be used together at all time, neither may be used without the other.)

***Not taking part with or assisting either of two or more contending parties.” Webster’s New International Dictionary, Second Edition, Unabridged.

1. PTA Leaders’ Responsibilities When a Dispute Arises:

- a. The PTA council/district PTA leadership must consult with the California State PTA leadership (through the California State PTA office, 916.440.1985).
- b. The council/district PTA leadership must meet with the leadership of all affected unit PTAs to instruct them in observance of PTA’s neutrality policy.
- c. The council/district PTA leadership must meet with the school district administration and bargaining unit(s) leadership to explain PTA neutrality.

- d. The unit PTA leadership must meet with the school site administration and school site bargaining leadership to explain PTA neutrality.
- e. The unit PTA leadership must communicate PTA’s position of neutrality to the membership.

2. PTAs MUST Remain Neutral:

- a. PTAs must not recruit substitute teachers or staff the classrooms. Classroom instruction is the responsibility of the school district. (See item 4.b.)
- b. PTAs must not recruit substitute classified employees or staff those positions.
- c. PTAs may be on school grounds in general activity areas if there are concerns about the safety of the students.
- d. PTAs must not distribute literature from either side, but may choose to distribute information PTA has prepared.
- e. PTAs must not show partiality toward the administration, the non-striking or striking personnel in any way (e.g., verbally, by serving refreshments, by walking the picket line, etc.).

3. Remaining Neutral Includes Continuing Normal PTA Activities:

- a. Regular PTA volunteer programs, e.g., volunteers in the media center, library playground, office, lunchroom, classrooms, etc. A list of those who volunteer regularly must be given to the school site administrator and school site bargaining unit(s) leadership.
- b. When PTAs regularly meet in the school facility, such meetings may continue. However, the PTA should make certain that its school facility use permit has not been temporarily suspended by the school district.
- c. Scheduled PTA-sponsored programs and projects may continue.
- d. If a PTA is licensed by the State of California as a child care provider, this activity may be continued. Contracts with parents obligate the PTA to continue providing the child care program. A licensed child care program usually includes a contract with the school district for use of the facility. If this is the case, the district is obligated to ensure safe use of the facility.

4. PTA Leaders’ Obligations:

- a. There is no intent by the PTA to infringe on the rights of its members to act as individuals. However, if an individual is perceived as a PTA leader, he/she is obligated to consider the effect of his/her actions on the PTA organization.
- b. If a PTA leader believes that conscience requires a statement or action favoring one side or the other, a public disclaimer* must be written and sent to the school site administration, school district superin-

tendent, president of the school board, school district employee organization and PTA organization leadership of council and district PTA.

- c. If a PTA leader is a school district employee and plans to work during a dispute, a public disclaimer* must be signed.

*A public disclaimer should include the following information:

Although I serve as _____ (position) _____ at the _____ PTA, any statement I may make or action I may take regarding the current employer-employee dispute is an individual statement or action and has no connection whatsoever with _____ PTA, whose position is one of strict neutrality.

Signature

Date

- d. If a PTA president is also a school district employee with membership in the organization negotiating with the school district, and a dispute arises, the president must delegate the responsibilities of the presidency to the first vice president during these negotiations.

5. In the Event of an Unexpected Walkout* the PTA:

- a. May provide volunteers, if necessary, on the day of an unexpected walkout to care for students in general activity areas on the school grounds until their parents make arrangements to get them home. This activity must not include classroom instruction.
- b. Must not staff classrooms. Staffing of classrooms by noncredentialed personnel is not only inconsistent with PTA efforts to have a qualified teacher in every classroom, it is illegal and the school district can forfeit its ADA (average daily attendance) funding from the state. (Authority: California State Education Code.)

*Job action without prior notification to the employer and with/without the approval of the employee organization (e.g., wildcat strike).

It Should Be Noted

- The school administration is legally responsible for staffing the school. The PTA, as an organization, cannot and must not assume this responsibility.
- When in doubt regarding any activity, consult with California State PTA leaders—office telephone 916.440.1985.

6. Dealing With the Media:

- a. PTA leaders should expect to be contacted by the media. Any personal opinion is an inappropriate subject for discussion by a PTA spokesperson.
- b. Consult the California State PTA (through the California State PTA office) if advice is needed about how to effectively communicate PTA's position of neutrality.
- c. If caught unprepared, do not attempt to speak "off the cuff" to the caller. State that this is not a convenient time to talk and you will return the call.
- d. PTA leaders must not attack other organizations or representatives of other organizations (i.e., employee groups or school board members).

4.5.52k AFTER A STRIKE

PTA has an opportunity and an obligation to help restore the school environment to one that provides a positive educational experience for all students.

PTA members must consider what is in the "best interests of all students" and be a vital part of the healing process between employees, employers and parents.

Any planned PTA activity for school district employees MUST have the cooperation and support of the school staff and the approval of the principal and the district superintendent.

For advice on handling individual situations, contact the California State PTA vice president for education and/or vice president for leadership services through the California State PTA office.

4.5.53 Reduced Class Size in Grades K-3

*Adopted July 1996 – Revised March 2002
Education Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes the importance of successful academic and personal development of children in the primary grades. The California State PTA believes there must be no more than twenty children and a qualified certificated teacher in each kindergarten through 3rd grade classroom throughout all California public schools.

The California State PTA further believes that to optimize the benefits of a twenty student maximum per certificated teacher there must be

- A separate physical area to accommodate each group of twenty children and the assigned certificated teacher;
- Flexibility in class structure that may include combination classes (K-1, 1-2, etc.) yet always considering the academic and developmental needs of each student when making placements;

- Assignment of teachers who are well trained in teaching techniques required to teach the early childhood/primary grade levels; and
- A firm funding commitment to make reduced class size an ongoing priority.

The California State PTA recognizes the financial obligation that reducing class size places on taxpayers of the state of California. The California State PTA strongly believes the people of California understand the importance of investing in children and public education, and therefore will be willing to undertake this obligation. The California State PTA further believes that K-3 class size reduction programs should be fully funded by the state.

4.5.54 Responsibility of Society to the Family

*Adopted March 1978 – Revised January 2005
Parent Involvement Commission*

The California State PTA believes:

- The family is the basic unit of society;
- The responsibility of rearing children and providing for their well-being belongs primarily to the family; and
- Programs that provide family support services should reinforce the autonomy of the family.

The California State PTA recognizes that:

- There is diversity in the size and structure of families and family beliefs;
- Insufficient knowledge about child development and the role of the parent/guardian as well as the stress of child rearing can hinder many parents/guardians from fulfilling the needs of their children;
- It may be necessary for governmental agencies, private agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide parent education and support services that will reinforce parents'/guardians' responsibility for their children; and
- In some instances, for the welfare of the child, it may become necessary to remove the child from the home environment after evaluation and due process.

The California State PTA believes that family support services should:

- Include parents/guardians in the planning and evaluation of programs and services;
- Be varied and flexible, encouraging voluntary participation;
- Be available to all families; and
- Include such programs as services to children with special needs, family counseling, education for parenthood, parent education, community health services and quality child care that reflect and respect the uniqueness of each community.

The California State PTA should encourage:

- Schools/school districts to adopt total school effort strategies for the maximum inclusion of all parents/guardians;
- Passage of legislation on national, state, and local levels that will enable communities to provide services that assist families to fulfill their responsibilities to their children;
- Cooperation with allied agencies that provide programs to strengthen the family unit;
- School programs and employer incentives that ensure that the needs of working parents/guardians are always considered; and
- Awareness of the Family School Partnership Act of 1995 (Labor Code Section 230.8) and the Parent's Rights as outlined in chapter 864, statutes of 1998, Education Code Section 51100-51102.

4.5.55 Safe School Environments

*Adopted March 1991 – Revised January 2005
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes that every child is entitled to a safe and peaceful school environment that is orderly and empowering. It is a place in which students and staff are free to learn and teach without the threat of physical and psychological harm. It provides surroundings that are nonviolent, with clear behavioral expectations, and disciplinary policies that are consistently and fairly administered and which confer recognition for positive behavior. It has established policies for proactive security procedures, emergency response plans and the timely maintenance, cleanliness and attractive appearance of the campus and classrooms. Additionally, a safe and peaceful school environment has a crisis response plan in place to deal with unforeseen emergencies.

The California State PTA believes that the four essential components that comprise a safe and peaceful school environment are: the strengths and experiences that students, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel bring to the school campus; the physical setting and conditions in which education takes place; the organizational and interpersonal processes that occur in and around school; and the general atmosphere or spirit of the school. These four components play a major role in the creation of safe school environment.

The California State PTA believes that there are certain qualities inherent to safe and peaceful schools and these places are places where:

- Students feel respected and know that the learning community cares about their individual needs and expects them to succeed;

- Parents and community members are welcomed and encouraged to share ideas, talents and resources for improving the school;
- High standards exist and are communicated on a regular basis;
- Students and staff know that learning and achievement are encouraged and highly valued and that positive social behaviors are expected;
- There is continued involvement and cooperation of parents, students, teachers, security staff, classified staff and law enforcement representatives in designing and revising of the school's discipline, disaster, safe school and crisis plans;
- Prevention is stressed and the staff and students are prepared for emergencies and other unforeseen situations;
- Programs are in place to prevent negative behaviors such as gang activity, drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse, bullying and other socially abusive behavior;
- Regular security checks occur;
- There are ongoing training opportunities that allow students and staff to increase their ability to deal with conflict, anger and other threats to safety.

PTA believes that school personnel, students, parents, and community members must work together to develop and implement a safe and peaceful school environment on all school campuses throughout California.

4.5.56 School-Based Health Centers

*Adopted April 1987 – Reaffirmed March 2004
Health Commission*

The California State PTA supports the concept of school-based health centers, believing all children and youth are entitled to physical and mental health care. PTA believes that the right of the individual to have access to health care is vital to sound health practices. PTA recognizes that adolescents, as a group, are the most under served population in terms of health care. School-based health centers give young people access they might not otherwise have to health care. Such health centers should reflect a commitment to address those health problems that limit a student's ability to learn.

PTA believes local community support is the key to the success of any center. Parent and student involvement should be a major part of the planning for any school-based health center. PTA further believes that any policy regarding school-based health centers should be developed and monitored by an advisory board, including broad-based parent and student involvement.

4.5.57 School Based Management (SBM) in Educational Decision Making

*Adopted March 2003
Education Commission*

The California State PTA supports the concept of School Based Management in the decision-making process. While the legal responsibility for school governance rests with local Boards of Education, PTA believes that the decentralization of decision making to school sites where service delivery occurs results in greater responsiveness to student and societal needs and improves the quality of educational opportunity.

PTA believes School Based Management should give constituents—parents, teachers, administrators, students and other community members—meaningful control over what happens in schools in order to enhance school performance and the quality of education provided to all students.

PTA believes that there is a vast potential for improving learning, instruction, school governance, operations, and outcomes when representative stakeholder groups receive meaningful training, and resources that enables them to participate in educational decision making.

Schools implementing effective School Based Management should:

- Have an active vision focused on teaching and learning that is coordinated with district and state standards for student performance.
- Develop knowledge and skills in an ongoing process oriented toward building school-wide capacity for improvement, creating a professional learning community and developing a shared knowledge base.
- Enlist and empower meaningful participation by all stakeholders in the decision-making process and share leadership responsibilities among all school employees.
- Have multiple mechanisms for collecting information related to school priorities and for communicating school-related information to all constituents and members of the school community.
- Use various incentives and acknowledge individual and group progress toward school goals, and
- Cultivate outside resources through involvement in the community and professional networks.

PTA recognizes that School Based Management must be given time to succeed. School and district leaders must be supportive of the School Based Management process, ensure that communication channels are kept open and provide all stakeholders with a clear understanding of their new roles, responsibilities and accountability.

4.5.58 School Bus Safety

*Adopted March 1986 – Revised October 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that school buses are a safe mode of transportation for students. PTA believes, however, that there is a need for continuing efforts by school districts, the legislature, and other government agencies to study, evaluate, and enact legislation to improve safety in the construction and operation of school buses so that they may be safe for all children.

California State PTA believes efforts to improve school bus safety should include:

- Replacement of Type I[†] school buses built before 1977 with buses that meet Federal Safety School Bus Regulations;
- Compliance with existing state and federal school bus regulations in the operation of all Type I[†] and Type II^{††} school buses;
- Inclusion of a three (3) point harness restraint per student on every new school bus purchased after January 1, 2002;
- Periodic monitoring of passenger and school bus driver seat belt usage;
- Continued school bus safety education programs for drivers and passengers including correct restraint usage and periodic school bus evacuation drills; and
- Continued study of additional methods of improving school bus safety measures for students riding in pre-2002 school buses, until such time as these buses may be eliminated from school districts' fleets.

California State PTA recognizes that, in view of mandatory automobile seat belt/restraint laws, there is a growing public concern regarding the absence of seat belts on school buses.

California State PTA encourages further research into all safety-related aspects of school bus construction, including the feasibility of additional safety equipment, especially on pre-2002 vehicles.

† Type I – large school bus weighing more than 10,000 pounds GVWR (gross vehicle weight rating). Driver seat belt required to meet federal safety standards.

†† Type II – school bus designed to carry less than 16 passengers plus driver and weighing less than 10,000 pounds GVWR. Driver seat belt and passenger restraining belts required to meet federal safety standards.

4.5.59 School Closure

*Adopted March 1980 – Revised January 1999
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes that while school closure is often viewed negatively, it can be an opportunity to improve the quality of education, as well as a necessity to decrease school district problems due to declin-

ing enrollment and financial restraints. The real acceptance and success of school closure depends upon demonstrated need, positive attitudes and total involvement of the community.

In considering school closure, PTA supports:

- Early and ongoing involvement of all those affected—parents, students, teachers, administrators, staff, board of education, and community;
- Appointment of a broadly representative committee that is charged with making a study that includes alternatives and making recommendations within a specific time period;
- Making all committee meetings open to the public;
- Use of a clear and defined plan of action;
- The concept of a districtwide facilities master plan;
- Formation of goals and objectives that meet Education Code requirements and student needs, and give highest priority to maintenance or improvement of a quality program for every student;
- Wide use of informational meetings and media coverage;
- Specific efforts to overcome negative attitudes and resistance to change;
- Decisions based on elements that include: location of students; amount of disruption; enrollment projections and housing trends; cultural, socio-economic and ethnic balance; safety; transportation; and facilities—size, quality, type, community use, and operating and closing costs;
- Acceptance of the legal authority of the school board to make the final decision;
- Inclusion in the school board's report of its final decision, the rationale for the assignment of students and personnel, and a plan for community involvement to facilitate a smooth transition;
- A plan assuring community involvement in recommending priorities to the school board for future re-use, redevelopment or disposition of closed sites; and
- Acceptance of the ongoing need for long-range planning.

Through involvement in the community, unit, council and district PTAs can play an important role in achieving understanding of issues in school closure and in building public acceptance for action taken. PTA can provide leadership by attending meetings of school boards, talking with school administrators and parents about the needs of students, and being available to serve on committees.

4.5.60 School Desegregation/Integration

*Adopted March 1978 – Reaffirmed February 1998
Education Commission*

The California State PTA is committed to integrated public schools offering quality education† for all children and youth, and believes:

- Equal educational opportunities should be provided for all students regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or sex;
- School districts have the responsibility for providing an integrated education for all students;
- Multicultural understanding should be an integral part of the education of all students;
- A desegregated/integrated school must provide opportunity for the development of attitudes and behavior based on the value of the individual;
- A desegregated/integrated school must encourage all students to be fully involved in school activities and to develop to their fullest potential;
- Teachers and other staff members should be trained to understand the needs of all children and youth, as well as the cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic diversity found in California's society;
- The entire school staff must work consistently to create a school climate of respect for the differences as well as the similarities of all students;
- Support and direction for the development, implementation and evaluation of desegregation/integration programs require the combined efforts of parents, students, the school system, and the entire community;
- PTA must serve as a unifying force for integration by involving the parents of all students in its activities†† and encouraging parent participation in school-sponsored activities; special efforts should be made to include parents residing outside the immediate school community.

† See related position statement: Basic Education (4.5.3).

†† Refer to Expanding PTA Membership (3.5).

4.5.61 School-To-Career Technical Education

*Adopted March 1985 – Revised July 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes in equal access to education that prepares students to meet the needs of a highly skilled, high technology workplace. A broad-based School-to-Career Technical Education program prepares all students for lifelong learning and successful transition to career and advanced education.

The California State PTA believes students need academically rigorous instructional programs that will enable them to think critically, to formulate and solve problems, and to work in teams. Students need opportunities to

apply their academic and technical skills to the world of work. School to career instruction should be integrated into the curriculum in the elementary grades to provide an awareness of the wide variety of careers available. Opportunities for career exploration should expand in the middle grades. In high school, students should have the opportunity to participate in a rigorous instructional program that forms a strong foundation for lifelong learning and advanced education.

The California State PTA further believes that School-to-Career Technical Education programs should be available to all students to enable them to fulfill their potential and to make informed career decisions. Therefore, such programs should:

- Be broad-based in structure, integrating academic and career coursework for lifelong learning;
- Promote mastery of both academic and career performance standards;
- Create a kindergarten-to-career sequence;
- Link industry needs with education;
- Provide teachers opportunities through professional development to collaborate with each other to develop powerful School-to-Career Technical Education teaching and learning skills;
- Offer career counseling and guidance in making informed educational and occupational choices to meet individual student needs;
- Establish a strong link to community colleges, technical schools and four-year colleges/universities via articulation agreements;
- Have equipment, facilities and supplies that are state-of-the-art;
- Meet health and safety standards;
- Integrate information on workplace health/safety and child labor laws into all work related programs;
- Establish strong partnerships with business and industry;
- Include measurement of a broad range of education goals related to student achievement and program effectiveness; and
- Include parents, educators, community and business in the development and implementation of the program.

4.5.62 Services for Children of Undocumented Immigrants

*Adopted January 1994 – Reaffirmed January 2000
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that the United States is a country of immigrants and that the resulting blend of cultures enriches our nation.

The California State PTA believes all children who reside in California, regardless of their parents' immigration status, have the right of access to a quality public education, adequate food and shelter, and basic health services. PTA also believes the congressional and executive branches of the United States Government must bear full responsibility for federal immigration policies and the resulting fiscal impact on the states.

The California State PTA further believes that it is in the interest of all Californians to ensure that all children, including the children of undocumented immigrants, have the opportunity to reach their full potential and become productive members of society.

4.5.63 Special Education†

*Adopted March 1983 – Revised July 2004
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes:

- All individuals with exceptional needs should receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment; this placement will include appropriate services ensuring access to the core curriculum, based on individual needs;
- Individualized Education Programs (IEP) should be developed on the basis of the needs of the individual student. The accurate assessment of each student's English, native language, and academic skills is necessary to ensure placement in the program that best meets the educational needs of the students;
 - The goal of the IEP should be to provide each student with the academic, vocational and living skills necessary to be a productive and independent adult;
 - The IEP team should determine the appropriate program placement, necessary related services, and which curriculum options to offer;
 - The general education teacher should be part of the IEP team;
 - The school district or the county office of education should provide transportation necessary to meet individual needs as determined in the IEP;
- Parents have the right, obligation and responsibility to be fully involved prior to and throughout the entire process;
 - Parent permission must be secured before testing and for assessment evaluations or placement changes in the student's program;
 - Parents must be notified in writing of and given every opportunity to attend all IEP meetings and reviews, and must receive a copy of the complete IEP;

- All teachers and school site personnel should be trained and sensitive to the special needs of exceptional students;
- Funding for non-educational needs of special education students should come from sources other than educational dollars. The California State PTA further believes it is essential for the Legislature to appropriate adequate resources to fully fund all mandated special programs and services (4.4.23).

† See related position statements: *Education: Categorical Programs (4.5.14)*, *Encroachment: Effect on Public Education (4.5.23)*. Also see summaries of related National PTA Position Statements: *Education of Children With Disabilities—1994*; *Education for Handicapped Students—1991*; *Children with Special Needs—1989*; *Physical Education and Sports Programs for Children with Developmental Disabilities—1990*. These are found under the *Citizenship and Equality of Opportunity Section III Legislative/Advocacy of the Quick-Reference Guide from National PTA*.

†† Transition is defined as the acquisition of skills necessary to develop the most independent and productive lifestyle an individual may be capable of achieving.

4.5.64 State Tax Reform

*Adopted January 1970 – Reaffirmed May 2001
Legislation Committee*

The California State PTA recognizes that to make wise decisions on state tax matters all citizens need to understand the overall tax structure, and how state revenues are generated and expended.

The California State PTA believes that the total tax structure should be strong and broadly based; that generation of revenues and distribution of the tax burden should be fair and equitable; and that providing adequately for the needs of children and youth should be a funding priority.

The California State PTA believes that tax policies should include concepts that:

- Establish and adhere to fiscal responsibility and accountability in government, including
 - Efficient methods of collection, administration and disbursement of tax revenues;
 - Periodic formal reviews of expenditures and revenues; and
 - Maximum local control of expenditures for local services when that serves the best interests of children and youth;
- Provide annually sufficient revenues to fund necessary and desired governmental services, including, but not limited to
 - Allocations from the State General Fund for the public schools in amounts required to provide quality education programs;
 - Allocations in addition to public education sufficient to meet basic health and safety needs of children, youth and families, and

- Full funding of mandated services;
- Establish and maintain revenue sources carefully planned and developed to avoid undue burden on the people but that ensure fairness, including
 - Reduction of existing tax inequities and avoidance of new ones; and
 - New or increased taxes when necessary to meet the needs of the people.

The California State PTA further believes that local control and responsibility for generating and expending funds for local services should be encouraged, and promoted through the democratic process based on a majority vote of the public on all issues.

4.5.65 Statewide Assessment

*Adopted July 1994 – Revised March 1999
Education Commission*

The California State PTA believes assessment must be an integral part of the instructional process. The overall goal of any student assessment program should be to identify what students know and how well they can apply that knowledge. A statewide assessment program linked to established curriculum frameworks provides information on the effectiveness of instructional delivery and curriculum support materials.

To obtain an accurate assessment to facilitate the improvement of teaching and student performance, standards must be determined and clearly communicated to administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Content and performance standards should be developed with input from parents and the community. Content standards should reflect knowledge and skills in specific subject areas of the curriculum frameworks. Performance standards must indicate the level of mastery of knowledge and skills.

The California State PTA affirms that performance standards should reflect a curriculum that engages students to develop problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning skills. Tests should not be limited to multiple choice or true/false questions but must provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they have learned. Student performance assessment must be linked to curricular goals that are compatible with the challenges and the changes in education.

An effective statewide assessment program should:

- Be developed through a well defined process which includes input from parents and the community;
- Involve parents/community at all levels;
- Reflect California curriculum frameworks and standards;
- Employ multiple measures to determine what students have learned and their ability to apply that knowledge;

- Provide strategies for monitoring the consequences of assessments to ensure beneficial impact on teaching and learning;
- Include assessment instruments that have been field tested;
- Provide scores that are reliable and valid; and
- Clearly communicate to parents and community an accurate profile of student and school performance.

See issue-related guideline: Assessment and Testing (4.6.1).

4.5.66 Status Offenders†

*Adopted March 1987 – Reaffirmed July 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes the need for community-based programs to help address the problems of status offenders. Such programs should include:

- Family involvement in the problem solving process;
- Family mediation in crisis situations;
- Counseling, training, work experience, education, and parent involvement;
- Cooperation and coordination with law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, and educational institutions;
- Out-of-home placement when in the best interest of the youth and/or the family;
- The provision of safe shelters for temporary placement while families and/or appropriate agencies are contacted.

The California State PTA strongly supports the use of School Attendance Review Boards and other social agencies in dealing with problems of habitual truancy or persistent or habitual refusal to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of school authorities.

The California State PTA will support limited secure detention of status offenders only under the following circumstances:

- Custody shall be separate and apart from alleged or adjudicated delinquents and adult inmates;
- Custody shall be for the purpose of
 - Determining whether there are any outstanding warrants;
 - Locating parent(s)/guardian(s) and arranging for return to home or to jurisdiction of residence;
 - Prevention of child endangerment.

The California State PTA will support court ordered secure detention of status offenders only under the following circumstances:

- Custody shall be separate and apart from alleged or adjudicated delinquents and adult inmates;
- Custody shall be determined by the court and for the least amount of time necessary to resolve the crisis;
- Custody shall be for the purpose of enforcing a court order and providing services that would not be available in the absence of limited secure detention.

† A status offender is any person under the age of 18 years who persistently or habitually refuses to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of a parent or guardian, is beyond the control of a parent or guardian, or who is under the age of 18 years when violating any city/county ordinance or state statute establishing a curfew based solely on age. Status offenders are governed by section 601 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code.

4.5.67 Student Participation in Public Demonstrations

*Adopted July 2006
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that organized demonstrations can increase public awareness of important issues and generate public will to bring about change. Student participation in public demonstrations provides real-life connections to classroom civics lessons and allows students to express their beliefs in a positive and meaningful way. Teachers and administrators can enhance student learning by exploring issues through classroom discussion and after-school forums.

The California State PTA believes a school's environment must provide a positive learning environment and physical safety for all students. While the California State PTA supports the rights of students to express their beliefs on campus through organized demonstrations, care must be taken to insure that the orderly operation of the school is not disrupted and the physical safety of students is not threatened. Leaving during school hours to attend an off-campus demonstration places the student outside the safety zone of the school and unnecessarily jeopardizes that school's education funding.

PTA believes parents and teachers are instrumental in helping students develop the skills for being responsible and caring citizens, and they should encourage students to find additional advocacy opportunities, including but not limited to:

- Participating in peaceful demonstrations when school is not in session;
- Visiting with legislative representatives;
- Drafting petitions, getting them signed by students, parents and teachers, and delivering them to policy-makers;
- Writing articles for school papers;
- Lobbying at school board meetings and asking community, youth advocates and experts to join them;

- Organizing letter-writing campaigns;
- Organizing press conferences and/or writing letters to the editor.

4.5.68 Student Records

*Adopted November 1976 – Revised January 2005
Education Commission*

Current federal and state law provides privacy protections for student records and further affords students, parents and guardians the right to obtain access to those records and exercise some control over the release and disclosure of information contained in those records.

The California State PTA believes it is important for local school communities to become knowledgeable about student record laws and their proper application to ensure proper protection of student records. PTAs are encouraged to work to expand their knowledge and understanding about the laws that govern student records.

The California State PTA encourages school districts to annually carry out the provisions of Education Code Section 49063, which requires:

- Notification to students, parents and guardians of their rights regarding access and control over records;
- Notification to students, parents and guardians of the types of records maintained by the school district; and
- Notification to students, parents and guardians of the position of the school official responsible for student records.

The California State PTA believes the timely transfer and receipt of student records is vital to the proper placement of transferring students; therefore, it is important that schools, both public and private, make every effort to immediately transfer student records upon request.

The California State PTA believes that school personnel must provide the utmost care toward the protection of students and student records by exercising the following safeguards:

- Ensure the confidentiality of all personal student data that is collected and provide for proper record maintenance which includes the destruction of records when their usefulness ceases; and
- Require proper identification for any person requesting access to student records.

The California State PTA encourages all public and private agencies that collect personal data on students to use the same standard of care in protecting student records as required by public schools.

4.5.69 Television and Video Viewing

*Adopted January 1982 – Revised March 2003
Communications Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that television and video viewing are major influences in the lives of children and youth, providing them with a vast amount of easily accessible information and vicarious experiences. PTA, therefore, will continue to encourage:

- All parents to make every effort to watch television with their young children and to be aware of what older children are viewing;
- All parents to be aware of and monitor videos that their children are watching, rental or purchased;
- All parents to guide their children in the choice of programming and to teach their children how to evaluate what they see and hear;
- PTA members to monitor TV programs and video content and to communicate suggestions and concerns to television stations, networks, cable television broadcasters, sponsors and producers; and
- PTA members to acknowledge and commend programming acceptable for family viewing.

The California State PTA believes it is necessary to develop an aware viewing public of children and adults who will limit their television and video viewing to carefully selected programs, and who will be able to understand the explicit and the implicit messages in TV programs, commercials and videos. PTA further believes that media literacy, including TV and video viewing skills, should be included in K-12 curriculum and PTA parent education programs.

4.5.70 Television Programming

*Adopted November 1978 – Revised March 2003
Communications Commission*

The California State PTA fully supports the First Amendment and is opposed to and will continue to oppose government censorship of the media and will oppose any attempt at censorship by any organization or group.

The California State PTA believes, however, that the First Amendment was not designed to protect the economic interests of broadcasters and/or advertisers. Because federal communication law requires television and radio broadcasters to broadcast in the “public interest, convenience and necessity,” and because the Children’s Television Act of 1990, Public Law 101-437 requires stations to air shows that “serve the educational and informational needs of children” and puts a limit on the number of minutes of ads per hour in children’s programs, it is the responsibility of station owners/management to provide programming meeting that criteria.

Although cable operators and cable programmers (networks) are generally less regulated, the California State PTA supports similar standards for the cable industry to voluntarily provide responsible programming for children.

Parents should communicate their concerns about programming to broadcasters, networks and advertisers, and encourage them to provide educational and responsible programming for children and youth.

4.5.71 Termination of Pregnancy Due to Medical Emergency

*Adopted November 1972 – Reaffirmed March 2004
Health Commission*

The California State PTA believes that providing for the physical and mental well-being of the family unit is important to the quality of life. The California State PTA further believes that everyone is entitled to appropriate, confidential, and timely health care and has the right to make decisions regarding treatment based on medical advice and in accordance with personal beliefs, which includes termination of pregnancy in a medical emergency.

A medical emergency as related to termination of pregnancy means a condition that on the basis of the physician’s good faith judgment so complicates the medical condition of a pregnant woman as to necessitate the immediate termination of her pregnancy to avert her death or for which a delay will create a serious risk of substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function.[†]

[†] Definition verbatim from the Pennsylvania Statutes as upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

4.5.72 Toy Look-Alike Guns

*Adopted March 1989 – Revised January 2000
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA believes that the safety and welfare of our children depend upon securing laws that protect them, whenever possible, from death, serious accidents and injury.

The California State PTA is concerned that toy guns have been manufactured to look like machine guns, semi-automatics and revolvers, and alarmed that deaths have occurred when toy guns were mistaken for real guns.

California State PTA supports:

- The current ban on the manufacture and sale of look-alike toy guns and urges its members to continue to be aware of legislation that might repeal or dilute this ban.

California State PTA urges:

- Its unit, council and district PTAs to participate in public education about this ban and its importance to the safety of our children; and
- Its unit, council and district PTAs to monitor their local toy stores to determine if they are in compliance with this ban.

4.5.73 Use of Pesticides In and Around Schools

*Adopted October 1998 – Reaffirmed March 2004
Health Commission*

The California State PTA believes that pesticides are by nature poisons, and exposure even at low levels may cause serious adverse health effects. Children, because of their higher metabolism, their developing organs and life-systems, and their play behavior patterns, are particularly vulnerable to the health impact of pesticides. Children are at an increased risk of cancer, neuro-behavioral impairment, and other health problems as a result of exposure to both active and inert ingredients in pesticides.

The California State PTA supports the use of Integrated Pest Management. This program does not prohibit all use of pesticides, but rather seeks to:

- Minimize exposure to pesticides;
- Emphasize non-chemical pest control methods;
- Address the causes of pest infestation;
- Require that a common-sense, environmentally sensitive approach to pest prevention be implemented; and
- Implement a basic four-step process of inspection, monitoring and recording, determining and documenting treatment, and evaluating results.

The California State PTA urges its unit, council and district PTAs to advocate for safer environments in and around schools by:

- Supporting efforts at the federal, state, and local levels to eliminate the environmental health hazards caused by pesticide use;
- Encouraging governmental bodies to regulate the use of pesticides in order to maximize state and local control;
- Encouraging long-term solutions for the control of pests that will significantly lower children's exposure to harmful chemicals by using the least toxic combination of pest control strategies; and
- Supporting "right-to-know" legislation and regulations in order for parents and the community to be more aware of the environmental health hazards associated with the use of pesticides.

4.5.74 Video Game Sites

*Adopted January 1983 – Reaffirmed January 2005
Community Concerns Commission*

The California State PTA is concerned about the continued number of video game sites, which may have an adverse effect on many of the young people who frequent such establishments. Studies have shown that game sites are often in close proximity to schools.

In many cases there is not adequate control of access by school-age children during school hours, which compounds the problems of school absenteeism and truancy.

Where little or no supervision exists, drug selling, drug use, drinking, gambling, increased gang activities, and other such behaviors may be seen. Where there is diligent supervision and adequate lighting, however, the interest of the customers centers on the games, and the quality of play seems to be the major concern of the youthful participants.

The California State PTA encourages its unit, council and district PTAs to be aware of and to educate their membership and the community regarding activities of young people at business establishments having video game machines, and the impact these activities have on school attendance and on alcohol and drug activity.

PTAs should study the impact of video game arcades and other establishments where games are located. They should work for the best possible solution that allows for reasonable use by children and youth, and, at the same time, does not encroach on the right of merchants to conduct business.

4.5.75 Year-Round Education

*Adopted March 1986 – Revised April 2005
Education Commission*

The California State PTA recognizes that year-round education can provide an opportunity to improve the quality of education and maximizes the utilization of existing school facilities. The acceptance and success of year-round education is enhanced by involving the parents/guardians, students, teachers, and community in a study of year-round education prior to implementation. PTA leaders should attend school board meetings, discuss students' needs with administrators, students and parents/guardians, and be available to serve on year-round education study committees.

In considering year-round education PTA supports:

- Early involvement of parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, staff, students, school board members, community and youth-serving agencies;
- Adoption of goals and objectives that meet student needs and California Education Code requirements and give the highest priority to providing a quality program for every student;

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- Decisions on factors that include the health and welfare of students; facilities use; teacher availability; voluntary versus mandatory desegregation plans; enrollment and housing trends; cultural, socio-economic, and ethnic balance; and the commitment of the community to coordinate youth services;
 - Specific efforts of the study committee to identify and meet actual community needs and, if a decision for year-round education has been made, to overcome the natural resistance to change;
 - Assignment of students within a family to similar or like tracks whenever feasible;
 - The legal authority of the school board to make the final decision;
 - Continued community involvement following transition to year-round education to ensure a positive climate for quality education;
 - Cooperation of community agencies and organizations that serve children in adapting and providing programs that meet the needs of the students;
 - Opportunities for students to participate in special classes, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities in a multi-track system;
 - Communication that will keep parents/guardians, teachers, and students informed throughout the year; and
 - Providing assistance to the principal and support staff who encounter additional responsibilities in the year-round schedule.
- Soliciting input from youth about budgetary and policy proposals that affect them;
 - Linking youth involvement opportunities to existing local governmental, school, and state programs that promote voluntary civic and community service;
 - Encouraging legislative bodies at all levels of government to include local youth in their policymaking efforts;
 - Encouraging schools and community programs to provide meaningful opportunities for youth to participate in planning and implementation;
 - Instilling in youth a sense of civic responsibility, citizenship, and leadership through active participation.
- The contributions of youth in working with adults will enhance programs that serve youth and will strengthen communities.

4.5.76 Youth Involvement

*Adopted March 2005
Student Involvement Committee*

The California State PTA recognizes the value of involving students in PTA to accomplish common goals and encourage future advocates, community leaders, and responsible adults. Students bring knowledge to PTA about education and other issues from their perspective as participants, and can provide insight to adult PTA members that helps PTAs address issues with information from different perspectives.

The California State PTA welcomes students to participate on its Board of Managers and includes student representatives on its commissions and committees.

Youth programs in schools and communities are directly impacted by budgetary and policy decisions made at the local or state level. Involving youth in policy discussion ensures that their point of view is considered in decisions that affect them.

The California State PTA believes that student contributions can build stronger and healthier communities. PTA supports efforts to develop youth participation by