

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

SEPTEMBER 2015

Our focus is can-do advocacy!

By Kathleen Fay, Vice President for Advocacy

Our Fourth District PTA Advocacy program has a new theme this year to focus on local “can-do” advocacy and promote civic engagement: “Count me in. ☑”

As a PTA member, we’d like to count you in on our advocacy efforts this year! Remember that an advocate is anyone who speaks up on behalf of children. Anyone who works to ensure that teachers understand the strengths and challenges of individual students or helps to identify resource needs and see that they’re met is an advocate. Those who speak up for all the kids in their child’s classroom, grade, or school can be considered an advocacy leader!

PTA was formed as a child advocacy organization, and today is the largest and most influential volunteer organization of its kind in America. Together, we work to do better for all our kids. How?

Locally, we might work with administrators to assure youngsters’ access to recess time, set up reasonable homework limits, get crosswalks or stop signs installed, promote arts opportunities for students, ensure that school facilities are safe and adequate, contribute to school district policy decisions, or push for city ordinances that protect youth.

At the county, state, and national levels, we take positions on, advocate for, and even co-sponsor legislation



that affects children, youth, and families. We safeguard funding for education. We speak to elected officials about the concerns of our communities. And we inform and educate the public about these important issues.

Whether our efforts are small in scale or vast in their influence, together we advocate to protect the interests of ALL our kids. Can we count you in?

This year, our advocacy efforts at Fourth District PTA will involve the active participation of many groups. To support the civic mission of schools, we’ll encourage voter registration drives to promote the engagement of both parents as well as students who are coming of legal age – and we’ll give you the tools to do so. We’ll work to make sure that our schools’ Local Control and Accountability Plans are drafted with input from PTA parents – and we’ll teach you how to do this. We’ll work with PTA councils and schools to find ways to identify and improve your school climate, to build up the arts, and to protect the rights and welfare of homeless children, foster youth, and English Language Learners.

That’s why we’re inviting all advocates and potential advocacy leaders to join with us this year: to do great things for all our kids. We offer training, resources, and support to help you succeed.

So, what do you say...Can we count you in?

Advocacy Workshop

Friday, September 25 — 9:15 a.m. to Noon

National University
3390 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa

Breakout sessions:

- ★**For Beginners:** Start Locally with Small Steps
- ★**For Advanced Advocates:** Bigger Steps for Change

Registration is required by September 23 at www.fourthdistrictpta.org

All PTA members are welcome to attend.

Every unit and council should send at least one representative.

Questions? Contact Fran Sdao at advocacy1@fourthdistrictpta.org

Keynote Speaker



Neal Kelley
Orange County Registrar of Voters

Fourth District PTA's Advocacy Program

Advocating for our children, families and public schools is a vital part of Fourth District PTA's program. Our goal is to create a network of council and unit advocates to help inform our members about important issues and empower them to speak out on behalf of children and youth.

The Fourth District PTA Advocacy Committee (the "A-Team") provides programs, resources and activities to meet this goal. These include:

- **Advocacy Training and Forums**, with expert speakers on a variety of topics. Open to all PTA members.
- **Sacramento Safari**, February 22-23, brings about 90 PTA members to Sacramento to learn about the issues and visit legislators' offices.
- The *Advocacy Communicator*, for advocates to use and share. Published monthly, September through June, and available at www.fourthdistrictpta.org.
- **Talking Points** with a brief summary of current information accompany each issue of the *Advocacy Communicator*. Advocates can use these to make oral reports to their units or councils.
- **Speaker's Bureau**, A-Team members come to your meeting to talk about a variety of advocacy issues.
- **LegLinks**, emails are sent to inform members about legislative activities and alert them when action is needed. Sign up at www.fourthdistrictpta.org.

House and Senate pass different ESEA/NCLB reauthorization bills

Congress has moved closer to a long-awaited revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In July, both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed reauthorization bills. Since the bills are not identical, a House-Senate Conference Committee must be formed to sort out the differences and arrive at a single version, which must then be approved by both houses.

The original ESEA was enacted in 1965. Until recently, Congress revised and renamed it about every five years. The current law, titled No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was due for reauthorization in 2007.

The House version of the revised law is titled the Student Success Act and the Senate version is called the Every Child Achieves Act.

National PTA has been actively tracking the legislation and is asking for the inclusion of specific provisions, especially for resources to support effective family engagement.

- **Advocacy Resource Notebooks** with information and resources for local advocates. May be purchased for \$15 at the Fourth District PTA office.
- **Council Legislative/Advocacy Chair Meetings** to discuss our advocacy programs, get feedback, and support local efforts.

For more information, contact Kathleen Fay, Fourth District PTA Vice President for Advocacy, at advocacy@fourthdistrictpta.org.

High School Exit Exam is waived

Although they are working on special legislative sessions dealing with two specific topics, California legislators quickly passed a bill to allow high school seniors in the class of 2015 who needed to retake the High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to graduate. The exam is no longer given because it doesn't coincide with Common Core State Standards.

Governor Jerry Brown called for two special sessions, one to find funding for transportation and infrastructure upgrades and the other to tackle healthcare financing.

These are the only topics the legislature should address during the special sessions, although lawmakers have introduced bills on other subjects that they say are related to the issues at hand.

The regular session of the legislature, which began on December 1, would normally adjourn on September 11 and reconvene on December 7. If the work on the two special topics is not completed, the lawmakers may extend the session.

Plan Your Advocacy Year

Advocacy Workshop

September 25 9:15 a.m.—noon

Advocacy Forums (formerly called Roundtables)

November 6 10:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m.

January 22 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m.

April 22 9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m.

Sacramento Safari

Orientation, February 5, 9:30 a.m.—11 a.m.

Trip, February 22-23

CAPTA Legislative Conference

March 14-15, in Sacramento