

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

APRIL 2016

California PTA sponsors bill to encourage family engagement

Getting families actively involved in education is a top priority for both National and California State PTA.

National PTA worked hard to make sure that family engagement was included in the new Every Student Succeeds Act that replaced No Child Left Behind.

California State PTA is seeking one-time state funding to help school districts develop family engagement strategies and provide training that will show parents how to be actively involved in their children's education.

To achieve this goal, CAPTA is sponsoring AB 2680 by Assemblywoman

Susan Bonilla. The bill would provide an unspecified amount of money that school districts can use to encourage "active and meaningful participation and training of parents, pupils and families of children from birth to age 18." The funding, which is subject to money being provided for this purpose in the annual State Budget, would only be available during the next two fiscal years.

School districts that accept the funding would offer programs that support parents as their children's first teacher, develop parent leaders, and encourage parents to advocate for a complete education that includes a full curriculum to close the access, achievement, and opportunities gaps.

CAPTA has several reasons for prioritizing family engagement. They include:

- There is compelling evidence that parent involvement increases student achievement.
- Every school district's LCAP requires parent participation. Many parents in California come from other states or other countries and do not understand our education system. Learning how our schools work will help them be active participants.
- Programs that reach out to families from different cultures build a more inclusive community.
- Family engagement programs are a cost-effective way to increase student achievement. According to one report, "schools would need to spend \$1,000 more per pupil to reap the same gains in student achievement that an involved parent brings."

- Research shows that family engagement improves attendance and reduces dropout rates.

Although this request is for a one-time allocation, PTA hopes that school districts will continue to allocate resources to sustain family engagement once they have experience with authentic engagement practices and see the benefits at their schools.

The Assembly Education Committee will hold a hearing on AB 2680 on April 6. Show your support for the bill by sending a message to the committee through

www.capta.org/focus-areas/advocacy/legislative-alerts

Voting in the Presidential Primary

Since the passage of Prop. 14 in 2010, California has had a top two open primary election process, whereby voters can cast their ballots for any of the candidates, regardless of party, and the top two vote recipients move on to the General Election.

This process does not apply to the Presidential Primary. Party members may only vote for presidential candidates in their own party. However, each party may decide whether to allow voters who register with no party preference to vote for candidates on that party's ballot. This year the Democratic Party will allow voters who register with no party preference to vote for a Democratic presidential candidate. The Republican Party will allow only registered Republicans to vote on the Republican ballot.

California's Primary Election will be held on June 7. The last day to register to vote or update an existing registration for the June election is May 23. Seventeen-year-olds who will be 18 by June 7 can register to vote now.

For more information go to the Orange County Registrar of Voters website at www.ocvote.com or the California Secretary of State website at www.sos.ca.gov. Online voter registration is available at either site.



Fourth District PTA unit and council win CAPTA advocacy awards

Congratulations to Robinson Elementary School PTA and Irvine Unified Council PTA! Both will be recognized with Spotlight Awards for advocacy at the California State PTA Convention in May.

Ability Awareness Day

Robinson Elementary School PTA

President Lora Fugitt

Vice President of Programs Kim Crackower

What is it like to be a child with physical challenges?

Fourth grade students at Robinson Elementary School in Trabuco Canyon had an opportunity to find out during Ability Awareness Day, sponsored by the school's PTA.

The fourth graders visited six awareness centers set up at the school. They looked at Braille books and tried to walk blindfolded, wore weights and ski gloves to experience fine motor difficulties, tried out walkers and wheelchairs, learned about hearing and speech problems and tried to use sign language. They also learned about famous people who overcame their special needs to succeed. Ninety students participated in the program.

"Our children now don't consider our SDC kids as 'those kids on that side of the school' anymore since beginning this program," said Robinson PTA President Lora Fugitt. "They are interacting with them at recess, sitting with them at lunch, and playing with them on the playground. We've noticed our regular education children being more helpful and understanding with the SDC kids. The program has brought awareness of others and has made our school a more welcoming place."

Nation's facilities funding falls short

Both California and the nation as a whole are not spending nearly enough to maintain and improve public school facilities, according to a report released in March.

National spending falls short by \$46 billion annually, the report states. California is about average in its spending on school facilities but falls \$6.7 billion short per year, or about \$1,083 per student.

The report was prepared by three nonprofit organizations: the Center for Green Schools, the National Council on School Facilities and the 21st Century School Fund.

"Research shows that high-quality facilities help improve student achievement, reduce truancy and suspensions, improve staff satisfaction and retention, and raise property values," the report states. "They also are integral to ensuring equity in educational offerings and opportunities for students."

In most states, including California, facilities are funded through a combination of state and local money. Poorer districts that cannot afford building upgrades end up spending more of their general funds on repairs.

The study is available at centerforgreenschools.org

Student Advocacy Trip to Sacramento

Irvine Unified Council PTA

President Connie Stone

Advocacy Chair Deloris Yang

For the past 11 years, high school students in Irvine Unified School District have had a unique opportunity to learn about state government and education issues through one-day trips to Sacramento organized by Irvine Unified Council PTA.

This year 31 juniors and seniors participated in the trip. They met with state legislators or their staff, representatives from the Legislative Analyst's Office and education consultants to the Senate Republican Caucus. They also toured Governor Brown's office and met briefly with the governor himself.

Students who wanted to attend the trip were required to submit an application and an essay outlining their concerns about California's public education and questions they'd like to ask state policy makers. Before the trip they attended meetings with the IUSD superintendent, school board members, IUSD lobbyist Bob Blattner, and representatives from Irvine Public Schools Foundation, California School Employees Association and Irvine Teachers Association.

"These Irvine high school students know more about education funding, issues and legislation than most adults do and we are very proud to have them represent Irvine at the state Capitol," said Connie Stone, IUCPTA President. "More importantly, they realize that they are a powerful voice in advocating for themselves, their schools and their communities."

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Forum

Friday, April 22

9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Fountain Valley School District
10055 Slater Avenue, Fountain Valley

Program to be announced soon!

All PTA members are welcome!