

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

MAY 2024

Get ready now for school board candidate forums in the fall

Many school districts will hold school board elections during the General Election in November.

PTA is non-partisan and never supports or opposes candidates for public office. However, PTA should be actively involved in helping voters make informed decisions on school board candidates. Many council PTAs do this by hosting candidate forums.

Election information and vote-by-mail ballots will be mailed soon after the school year starts, so if your PTA intends to sponsor a candidate forum in the fall, the time to start planning is now.

Here are some things you can do to get ready:

- Form a committee to organize the forum.

- Review the information on candidate forums in the *California State PTA Toolkit*.
- Will the forum be in person or virtual? If in person, identify and reserve a location for the event. Larger school districts may want to organize several forums in different locations. If you plan a virtual forum, do you have someone with technical skills to run that?
- Develop a plan to publicize the event.
- Set up a timeline and assign tasks.
- Estimate costs and include them in your PTA's budget for next year.

Planning ahead will allow you to quickly and efficiently set up your candidate forums in the fall.

Braver Angels show how to have a civil conversation

Can you have a calm, civil conversation with someone whose opinions differ radically from yours?

Yes, it is possible if you follow a few guidelines.

That was the message from two Irvine teachers who are also members of [Braver Angels](#), a nonpartisan national organization that is working to “bridge the partisan divide and strengthen our democratic republic.” Fifty-two PTA members attended the April Advocacy Forum to learn how to do this.

Presenters Mary Thomas-Vallens and Debbie Velasquez recommended “**LAPP**” skills.

The first of these is **Listen**. Stop talking and just listen carefully to what the other person is saying, without interrupting. Listen for *anything* you can agree with.

Acknowledge what you are hearing by recognizing strong emotions or repeating what was said. **Agree** when you can, even if it's just to say “I see that as a problem, too.” Ask questions if you don't understand what the person has said.

Then **Pivot**. When the other person seems ready, ask if you may share your thoughts on the matter. Wait until you get a positive response.

Share your **Perspective** in a respectful manner. Describe a different viewpoint, what you have learned about the topic, or your perspective based on your experience.

If the person indicates, verbally or nonverbally, that they are not ready to listen to you, you may have to repeat the first steps. If there is still no willingness, it's time to politely exit the conversation.

Mary and Debbie gave examples of how these skills can be used in difficult situations, even in tough conversa-

tions about family issues.

Mary is eager to present this workshop to groups of adults or teenagers. You can contact her at marytv@braverangels.org. There is no charge for the workshop, although donations to the organization are welcome. For more information about Braver Angels, you can watch videos [here](#) and [here](#).

Literacy bill dies without a hearing

[AB 2222](#), which would have required all California schools to teach literacy through the “science of reading,” has died without a committee hearing.

The bill, authored by Assembly Member Blanca Rubio with the backing of 16 bipartisan co-authors, was supported by California State PTA and 50 other organizations. It was opposed by the California Teachers Association, which objected that the bill “would duplicate and potentially undermine current literacy initiatives, would not meet the needs of English learner students and would cut teachers out of decisions, especially on curriculum,” according to an article at EdSource.org.

Two advocacy organization for English learners also objected to the proposed legislation, saying it would dismantle the state's progress toward improving literacy instruction and hurt English learners, according to another EdSource article.

Supporters of the measure say they will bring it back next year.



National PTA responds to President Biden's budget

National PTA President Yvonne Johnson issued the following statement on President Joe Biden's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2025:

President Biden's FY25 budget proposal requests \$82.4 billion for the U.S. Department of Education—a \$3.1 billion increase over current budget allocations. National PTA is pleased to see the proposal makes investments in education. We particularly appreciate the \$200 million increase for the Title I program, which provides support to high-poverty schools across the nation. We also appreciate the \$200 million increase for Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants to states. The proposal also includes increased funding to support infants, toddlers and preschool children with disabilities, as well as a \$10 million increase in grants to address the shortage of special education personnel.

Our association also appreciates the request included in the proposal for continued funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) grant program, which provides much-needed technical assistance and partnership development to states and school districts to foster meaningful family engagement. We will continue to advocate, however, for at least \$25 million to be allocated to the program so that it can be expanded to serve more families.

National PTA is also pleased to see the requests included in the proposal to increase funding for the Title IV -A program to provide all students access to a well-rounded education; create a new program to address learning recovery including through summer and after-school programs; increase funding for full-service community schools; continue investments in school-based mental health services to increase the number of certified school-based counselors, psychologists, social workers and other mental health professionals supporting students; increase funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement evidence-based, comprehensive school health policies, practices and programs designed to improve mental and behavioral health; increase funding to support career and technical education, high school

Get ready for another year of advocacy

Advocating for children, families and public education is central to PTA's mission. Be sure your PTA is ready to participate in this important role next year.

- Make sure your PTA picks an advocacy representative. This can be an elected office or an appointed chair position.
- Include advocacy in your PTA budget for next year.
- Plan to send a representative to Sacramento Safari, scheduled for February 24 and 25, 2025. Include about \$950 in your PTA budget for the trip.

graduation, college preparation and access; and increase funding for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights to help ensure that every child has access to a fair and equitable education.

At PTA, we have continuously advocated for increased and equitable federal investment in our public schools to ensure all children have access to a high-quality, equitable and well-rounded education in a welcoming, supportive and inclusive environment. We have also continuously advocated to ensure supports and services are in place for meaningful family engagement and true family-school partnerships.



The 2023 California School [Dashboard](#), with a complete array of performance indicators, is now available.

The Dashboard is the state's online school accountability system. It uses multiple criteria such as academic achievement, graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, and college and career readiness, to measure school success. It also indicates whether schools have improved or declined in each area. Due to the disruptions of the pandemic, some of these indicators were not included during the past several years. Now they're back.

The Dashboard can help parents get the information they need to work on priorities for their school district Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP).

The California Department of Education provides a [Toolkit](#) with information to help parents navigate and understand the Dashboard.

Dr. Al Mijares to retire from OCDE

Dr. Al Mijares, Orange County Superintendent of Schools, has announced that he will retire at the end of June. He has been on medical leave since last year and recently disclosed that he has cancer.

Dr. Mijares has served for 12 years as the head of the Orange County Department of Education. He was appointed to fill a vacancy in 2012, elected for a full term in 2014 and re-elected in 2018 and 2022.

The Orange County Board of Education will appoint someone to complete the rest of Dr. Mijares' term, which ends in 2026.

The Orange County Department of Education oversees the finances and operation of school districts in our county. OCDE also provides an array of services and resources to school districts and students. These include teacher training, technical support, legal services, and alternative education programs for certain students.