

NEWSFLASH

Michigan PTA's Newsletter For Leaders

April 2020

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LEADING THROUGH A HEALTH CRISIS

A MESSAGE FROM MICHIGAN PTA'S VICE PRESIDENT OF OUTREACH & SUPPORT

I am certain that when each of you agreed to take a leadership role for your PTA this school year, you didn't go into it thinking, "I'm prepared to lead this community through a health crisis. I didn't either." And while the impacts of the Shelter in Place, closure of in-person school and temporary closure of businesses have impacted our PTA units and councils, please do not overlook how it impacts each of you personally.

It became very apparent to me during the second week of Shelter in Place. After dozens of calls, 100s of texts, hours of watching news stories, and reading social media in an attempt to unravel this overwhelming impact to my life - that I needed more silence. Silence to stop and hear my thoughts. Silence to feel my emotions. Silence to open my mind and begin to corral all of what I have learned and that I am now facing as a wife, parent, co-worker, and PTA Leader. It sounds so easy to do, but understand, I am an extroverted responder. When I'm not on a call or in a meeting, I'm listening to music. I also have a driving need to nurture and problem solve. This waterfall of change and impact was drowning me to the point that I can't see how to move ahead. Allowing more silence for myself has heightened what I can hear; helped me accept what I know I can and can't respond to; as well as strengthened how I manage the emotions that come with this roller-coaster of dysfunction.

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As PTA Leaders, we are accustomed to providing stability; and doing so on quick order. We jump right into the race and run. In the sprint we are currently in, people are running in all directions. It's hard to see where you need to go and where we need to direct our followers. I recommend that you take the time to listen to your needs. Listen even if it costs you a deadline, an immediate answer to the text on your phone, or replying to the new emails that have come in. Follow your calm to hear what you need, take a long walk, listen to music, exercise, absorb some silence and peace. Do whatever pulls you to genuinely hear and feel yourself to understand where you're really at. Let it bring you calm and organize your mental and physical being. This care for yourself will evolve and trickle down into your family life, your colleagues as well as your PTA Leaders and Members.

It's important to allow yourself the time and clarity to process each and every change. Each emotion and every moment of growth will come from this crucial and critical time. Embrace and value who you are and the impact you make.

Thank you for your continued commitment, your leadership and your vision to the mission of PTA. Together, we will continue to make a difference today and tomorrow.

Tracey Troy
Michigan PTA Vice President of Outreach & Support

*As we work through this health crisis together, our PTA mission stays the same:
to help make every child's potential a reality*

We can achieve this mission by:

- Supporting schools and serving as conduits for information to the community. If your PTA is looking for ways to help your school, the first step is to ask *how* you can help. One easy way to help schools is to use the communication channels that you have in place while making sure you are reaching all families. Conversely, PTA/PTSAs can gather parent questions and ideas to share with the school to reduce the volume of people reaching out. National PTA has a resource page at [PTA.org/COVID-19](https://pta.org/COVID-19) that provides information about the current health crisis and resources for PTA leaders, families, and educators.
- Michigan PTA has compiled a list of online resources for parents and students during COVID-19 closures that you can share with your members and community. The list includes family activities, educational resources, online schooling information, health and wellness resources, links to companies offering free subscriptions, and more.
- Building morale in our schools and communities. While we can't meet in person right now, there are different ways your unit can reach your school community. This is a great opportunity to put your creativity to the test to help people feel connected during a time of isolation. We're already seeing some great ideas out there such as virtual spirit weeks, story time and notes written to neighbors with sidewalk chalk. Be sure to use a variety of methods to communicate in order to reach families that may have barriers.
- Advocating for our students and families. National PTA and Michigan PTA have been keeping a close eye on legislation in regard to the current health crisis. For detailed information or to contact your legislator please visit: pta.org/home/advocacy/take-action and michiganpta.org/covid-19-related-advocacy.html

HOW DOES COVID-19 AFFECT YOUR PTA MEETINGS?

GUIDANCE FROM THE MICHIGAN PTA SECRETARY

BY LIZ JARVIS

Truly, we are living in unprecedented times. The word "unprecedented" means we have no precedent, no framework under which to function. For a PTA unit, that's only partially accurate.

As PTA units, we can still have meetings, and have votes. We can even hold elections. All of this may be done virtually. It requires planning, and a lot of communication. Make sure the whole board steps up to help, and get the word out.

You may hold a meeting over the phone, like a conference call. You may hold a meeting using Zoom, or Skype, or some other app. You must make sure everyone has access to the tool, and knows how to use it. (Ask your kids!) Do a test run with just your board (how about an exec board meeting?) to get the bugs out.

While we determine how we can meet, how we can hold elections, and so on, we must remember what has not changed: we still have our bylaws, our trusty guide to how we function. Dig them out, dust them off (sigh...) and read up. No matter what accommodations we make toward keeping safe, we must still follow our bylaws.

In the section on Meetings, you will see your unit's requirements for quorum. Quorum is the minimum requirement to be able to conduct official business. If you do not have quorum, you may still meet and discuss things, but you may NOT conduct official business. No motions, no votes, no elections. Please verify what constitutes quorum for your unit.

You will also see information about when your PTA meets, and how much advance notice must be given if a meeting date is changed. When you have a virtual meeting, those rules don't change. So if your PTA meets on the second Tuesday of the month, for example, it still must meet on the second Tuesday of the month, unless you send out notices to the membership, in a timely manner, as to the change of date.

As with all meetings, you should have an agenda for your virtual meeting. Make sure it is available to everyone—why not send it out before the scheduled time? You must have someone—usually the Recording Secretary—take minutes, even if you do not have a quorum present. Minutes are the official records of your organization. While minutes should not be a detailed blow-by-blow report of the meeting, they should include the What, Who, When, and Where. Give the Where the meeting was held, When it was called to order,

Who was in attendance, and What happened. Motions should be written out, word for word. Include who made the motion, and what the vote was. Did the motion pass, or fail? You can always attach a copy of the agenda to the minutes, for reference. Note that some apps will let you record the meeting. That is fine, but it does NOT replace written minutes.

A word about Voting. All votes—including elections—can be done in a virtual environment. Please check your bylaws for reference. Only paid members have the privilege of voting. If you are holding a meeting over the phone, like a conference call, we recommend a roll call vote. The secretary says each attendee's name, and the attendee says his/her vote. After all votes are given, the secretary tallies the vote, and announces the result. If a private vote is preferred, perhaps for an election, advance planning is required. You may wish to create a Google Form where all the candidates are included. There should be a section for the voter's name and email. Google Forms will generate a spreadsheet with the results. You will be able to see who has replied, and who hasn't. Be sure to specify how long the voting will last—long enough so everyone has a chance to vote.

What about Floor Nominations? Once your Nominating Committee has posted the slate (by email, on the web site, the FB page, Twitter, all of the above...) you can be open for nominations. We recommend self-nominations only, when doing virtual elections. Let everyone know what the window for nominations is, and give them a heads-up when the window is drawing to a close. After the time is up, announce all candidates, including the slate and any new candidates. Make sure all candidates are included on your election form! You may want to send our notices of a special meeting to announce the winners.

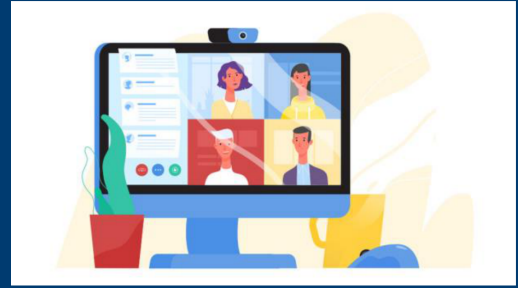
No matter how you hold the elections, please remember to add the new officers to your Member Hub page. Make sure you are adding them for NEXT year, and not this year. If you don't know how to do this, please call Michigan PTA at 734-975-9500.

There are other issues to address, and questions to answer. I will cover those next time. For additional guidance visit: <https://nyspta.org/guidance-for-units/>

Keep Well! Stay Safe!

Liz Jarvis
Secretary, Michigan PTA

How to hold a successful Online Meeting



With the in-person restrictions due to COVID-19, all meetings can be held by video or audio conference calls for the remainder of the school year. However, they cannot be held via a chat app or other online tools like email.

Key Considerations

- Video conferences only work well if all participants have broadband; likewise, most conference call services involve calling into a long-distance number
- Allow plenty of notice for the members; providing as many announcement of the meeting as possible (email, social media, phone); at least 10 days and no more than 60 days
- Prepare and distribute the meeting agenda in advance
- Members must be able to both hear and respond to each other
- Take attendance/roll call; establish a quorum
- Voting and all other normal business activities are allowed, although voting should be done by roll call
- Members should identify themselves by name each time they speak during discussions and reports
- The meeting presider (president) must be prepared to manage the attendee discussion, keeping focused on the agenda item at hand
 - Pause for a few seconds between questions or discussion statements to allow participants to respond, and when they become familiar with the pattern, the audience is less likely to talk over the presider, knowing to anticipate the cue. Social cuing during a virtual meeting becomes a heightened sense of hearing versus watching the audience body language.
 - Minimize background noise
 - Utilize the 'Mute Participants' tool to ensure the presider or presenter can be heard, unmuting the participants at key times for feedback, discussions or voting
- Prepare minutes
- Abide by the standing rules
- The board and its members need to be sure not to lose sight of the legal and ethical responsibility while hosting an online meeting. Other tasks and distractions can cause chaos and unnecessarily cause delays in the meeting end time.
- Practice the using the online conference tools prior to the meeting with a colleague

Have more Questions?
OutreachSupportVP@michiganpta.org

Q&A

Can our PTA donate to other community non-profits who are taking lead roles in supporting the many under-served families in our district? Can we offer some sort of direct support to members (individuals and families) of need in our school communities?

The IRS is very clear that a 501(c)3 public charity may donate funds to another 501(c)3 charity with a similar mission. That means that a PTA can donate money only to nonprofits who have similar purposes. For example, you could not donate to the Red Cross, but you could donate to a non-profit children's library, provided it had 501(c)3 status. Likewise, the IRS is very clear that a public charity may not gift funds to individuals or families unless that is what the charity was organized to do. PTAs are not organized for that purpose, so we may not give money (including gift cards) to individuals or families in our school communities, regardless of need. So the PTA may donate to other community organizations if they meet the criteria above (and assuming the association voted to do so), but the PTA could not gift funds to an individual or family.

What if my unit is interested in redirecting existing funding to support teachers' online learning? Can our Executive Board vote for emergency funding and reallocate existing funds to supply tools such as headsets?

Every executive board has some power to spend funds that were not budgeted. every PTA can spend up to this limit in their bylaws on any un-budgeted expenses the board deems necessary. To spend more than the limit, even if those funds were released for a different line item in the budget, requires association approval in advance. We encourage each PTA to look at their budget and determine if there are categories already there and approved that are broad enough to reasonably include the items the PTAs are looking to purchase. If not, and if the board wants to spend more than the limit, the PTA president can call an emergency meeting with 10 days notice and hold it via the methods listed above.

Can our PTA buy restaurant gift cards for our school staff members since we cannot hold our annual staff appreciation luncheon?

No. Giving a gift card is the same as giving someone cash. In addition, giving a volunteer cash or a cash equivalent like a gift card on behalf of the organization may cause them to be considered an employee or an independent contractor by government agencies. And the IRS considers cash gifts (including gift cards) as report-able income on the recipient's tax filings.

There are several other things that PTAs can do to help:

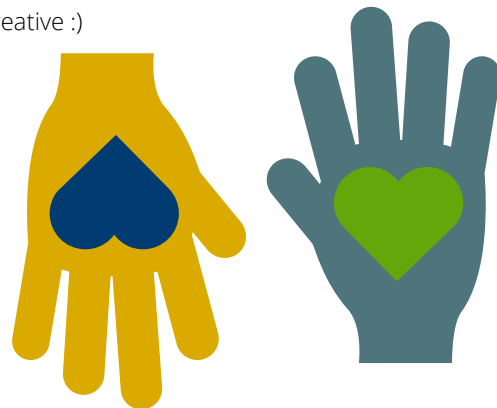
The PTA may advertise any and all benefits/fundraisers being held for individuals or families in need or local charities who are assisting those in need, regardless of who is organizing them. That includes letting everyone in your community know GoFundMe campaigns, etc.

The PTA may also help with a fundraiser by advertising it and encouraging volunteers, but it cannot be an official PTA activity and all money collected must go to the organization holding the fundraiser. Checks cannot be made out to PTA and no deposits may be made to the PTA account on behalf of another organization or family in need.

The PTA may sponsor a food/diaper/necessities drive or solicit donations of those items to be given to a local food bank, etc. "Necessities" could include personal protective equipment (PPE) for local hospitals and medical facilities if that's a need in your area.

What can PTAs do for staff appreciation while schools are closed?

- If local businesses or members of the community wish to donate gift cards/certificates to school staff, you may facilitate that donation.
- You can issue a "rain check" for your usual staff appreciation activities and plan to hold them as soon as in person school resumes or whenever large gatherings of people are permitted again.
- You can send thank you cards (by mail, email, or social media) thanking staff for all their amazing work during this trying time. Notes from parents and/or students will be particularly meaningful. You should work with the school principal to determine the best way to distribute these notes to the staff.
- Be creative :)



A Message to Students

by Jennifer Johnson, VP of Student Involvement and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Chair

Hello Families,

We understand and empathize with each of you as we navigate through this challenging time in our society. Junior and Senior students and families are presented with the uncertainty of when SAT and ACT preparations and tests will resume.

Senior students are presented with the uncertainty of not only scholarship deadlines, but also when, how and where pivotal events, such as prom and graduation will take place. Although we are not in control of these things, we are able to help with navigating scholarship opportunities that are available for students whether they choose community college, vocational, university, apprenticeship, military, gap year or whichever track they decide is best for them.

We recognize the fact that some of our minority, under-served, special needs and vulnerable populations often have a disadvantage in accessing post-secondary and/or transitional opportunities and have started a database of information to be inclusive of all students. For more detailed information on scholarships, student involvement, and diversity, equity and inclusion please visit these resources: Student Involvement Newsletter (smore.com/jsh2q) and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Newsletter (smore.com/6e49q).

A note about student voice.

Student voice is a phrase that many students and families hear on a routine basis. Do you know what it means? Better still, what does it mean to you? Not your mom, dad, aunt, grandfather ... but to YOU. Yes, you, the actual student.

Are you aware that PTA student voice encompasses ALL students? Kindergarten through college/university and vocational schools? Don't feel bad if you did not know this. Some adults are not aware of that either.

National PTA supports the efforts that Student Government Associations in schools and on college/university campuses are doing to advocate for the views of their students.

YOUR VOICE is needed and wanted. After all, how can we fully advocate for you, if you are not at the table?

Interested? Contact Jennifer Johnson
StudentInvolvementVP@michiganpta.org

Working to provide a supportive and inclusive climate during the current health crisis

In order to reach all families please consider a variety of communication methods.

- Zoom, Google Hangouts, or other live platforms
- Phone or video calls
- Remind
- Emails
- Letters or postcards home



An organization that recognizes diversity values differences and similarities among people through its actions and accountability. These characteristics include age, ethnicity, gender, language and culture, socioeconomic status, among many different things.

For more information visit pta.org/home/run-your-pta/Diversity-Inclusion-Toolkit

Greetings Membership!

From Brian Johnson, VP of Membership

First and foremost, I thank all those who have contributed their time developing and sharing resources during this health crisis! One thing that we can be certain of is that our efforts have proven to be invaluable during this time of uncertainty. Currently, we have 32,457 registered voices that are sending a resounding message of hope, unity, and that our kids matter. In our membership, we have businesses who support our cause with contributions. Also, we have staff who are giving their time and resources, teaching online, showing up at a student's house waving from a car, or even coming close enough to give a math lesson. Additionally, they support students' needs whether communicating via phone, Seesaw, FaceTime, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and/or sending information via email, Facebook, or other means, to parents about resources that will help as far as money, food, safety, guidance, health and overall well-being. Collectively, you are our heroes! Last month, we gained 1,118 members!

Don't forget our membership challenges and awards!

For details, email Brian Johnson
at membershipvp@michiganpta.org

- **April/May membership Challenge- Batter Up! Homerun!**- Qualify to win \$100 Gift Certificates at Shop PTA. All Units who achieve this goal will receive the Home run badge for gaining 20 members more than your unit's 2018/2019 membership between August 1st and May 28th
- **Awards** (Deadline Extended to June 1): Gold Star, 100% PTA, Michigan PTA Honor Roll, Student Membership, Business Membership.
- **Students Rock Awards**- All Units who achieve this goal will earn the Students Rock Badge. Units can only win one of the Students Rock Grand Prizes.
- **Most Student Membership Award**- Grand Prize \$150 grant into their unit line item if a PTSA or Family Engagement line item if a PTA/PTSA
- **Most Inclusive Student Membership Award**- Grand Prize \$150 to be divided among the representing student populations via line item in unit's budget
- **Membership Growth Award**
- Register and pay state dues for members exceeding 2018-2019 membership total by June 30th
- **Great Lakes Award Level**- All Units who achieve this goal will earn the Great Lakes Badge
- **Model T Award**- 100% growth
- **Petoskey Stone Award**- 50% growth
- **Mackinac Island Award**- 25% growth
- **Badge Bonus**- Highest Statewide percentage of membership growth

Spotlight on Thornton Creek Elementary PTA!

Thornton Creek Elementary PTA supports the students by providing 30 assemblies with special guest speakers discussing a wide range of topics that meets the needs not only of the children, but also of parents and the community. We all know that experiences such as field trips provide our children with real world understanding and involvement; we know that you can only know so much from books, but hands on experiences build connections. Thornton Creek PTA provides grants to fund admissions and transportation costs for these meaningful field trips. Additionally, they provided support to teachers in the form of grants.

As our world becomes increasingly ingrained with technology, we need our kiddos to be able to utilize digital and electronic resources which equips them with the skills for tomorrow. Thornton Creek PTA provides subscriptions for educational resources: Dreambox, RazKids, Scholastic News Online, and Newsela. Learning does not stop when the bell rings. This PTA sponsors after school programs including After School Science, Art, and Chess Club.

Bringing families together is important, so this unit puts on fun social events like popsicles at Open House, family movie nights, roller skating nights, Breakfast with a Buddy, and their carnival, Gator Gala. They recognize every staff member and student with birthday wishes, teacher appreciation week and fifth grade graduation. They encourage community building through spirit wear sales and a full color yearbook.

To create a place of comfort, beauty, and enjoyment, they contribute to the school grounds improvement. Last, but not least, one of the most important things that this PTA does is communicate to help keep families informed, such as in their weekly Gator Gazette newsletter, and an online family directory through the MemberHub site. Let's give a round of applause to: THORNTON CREEK ELEMENTARY PTA!

If your unit has done amazing work, especially during this time, we want to hear about it and post it so that ALL can see that we care about "making every child's potential a reality."



NOTEWORTHY

Deadlines have been extended!

Fran Anderson Scholarship

<https://www.michiganpta.org/scholarship.html>

Michigan PTA State Award

<https://www.michiganpta.org/state-pta-awards.html>

Have you joined the new Michigan PTA Leadership
Community group?

Get help and inspiration or share ideas and best
practices.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/636047820289160/>

Connect With Michigan PTA!

Website: michiganpta.org

Facebook Page: facebook.com/everychildonevoice/

Facebook groups by interest:

- Michigan PTA Advocacy
- Michigan PTA Reflections Network
- Michigan PTA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Michigan PTA Membership/Memberhub
- Michigan PTA Leadership Community

We're Here to Help

Although Michigan PTA does not have a physical office and no staff at the moment, volunteers are still available to help answer questions. How you can reach us:

734-975-9500

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Livonia, MI 48151

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president@michiganpta.org

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