

Michigan PTA Advocacy Summit  
March 20, 2021

# SESSION HANDOUTS

# Michigan PTA Advocacy Tool VoterVoice

Michigan PTA Members can use this tool for communication with politicians in Lansing and Washington, D.C.



VoterVoice is an online software for both national and state advocacy communication. This software helps Michigan PTA quickly implement an intelligent approach to online governmental affairs. PTA Members can receive legislative updates from Michigan PTA and National PTA and have their voices heard on issues impacting education and children in Michigan and Washington, DC. This software does not cost any money to each participant. Michigan PTA and National PTA pay the costs. **Sign up today to be actively involved in advocacy for children :**

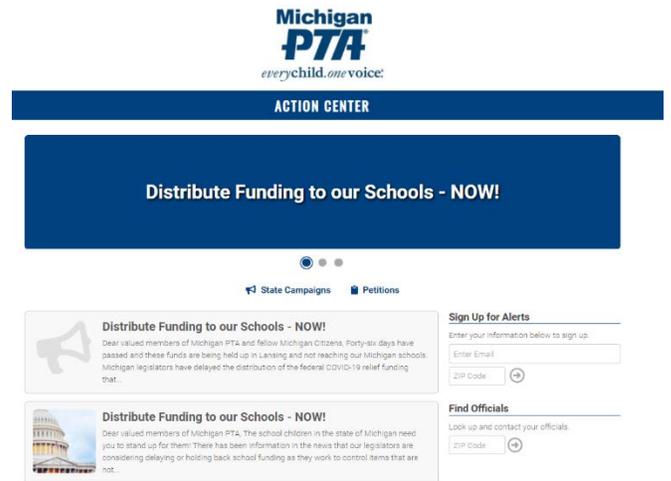
*Send these links to your members  
via email or post on your  
website*

## Michigan PTA VoterVoice

<https://www.votervoice.net/MIPTA/home>

## National PTA VoterVoice

[www.pta.org/home/advocacy/take-action](http://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/take-action)



Questions on how to share VoterVoice with your members or how to gain more advocacy impact?

 Contact the Michigan PTA Advocacy Committee for the answers!

Email [childadvocacyvp@michiganpta.org](mailto:childadvocacyvp@michiganpta.org) or call [734-975-9500](tel:734-975-9500)

## Checklist For Planning a Meeting With an Official (At His or Her Office or "Turf")

All Levels

- Will your action be based on real power? Will it be fun?
- Is everyone in your group comfortable with the plan? (Is it within the experience of your group?)
- Will the plan be outside the experience of the target?
- Are your demands clear and simple?
- Do you have several fallback demands?
- Do you have an appointment?
- Have you scouted the building and made a floor plan? Do you know where to find:
  - Elevators and stairs
  - Bathrooms?
  - Parking or nearest transit stops?
  - The target's office?
  - "Hot spot" where your cell phone works - or a pay phone?
- Can the site accommodate disabled members?
- Has the group selected who will present information at the meeting? Are people prepared for their roles?
- Has the group selected who its spokesperson for the action?
- Have you held a dress rehearsal for the spokesperson and the participants?
- Have you calculated how you will demonstrate your power? Do you plan to have symbols with you (letters, petitions)?
- Do you have a good turnout plan for the action, including last-minute reminder phone calls?
- If you want the media, have they been notified? Have you...
  - Sent a press release, including a notice of your photo opportunity, a week ahead of time?
  - Called the daybook a week ahead of time?
  - Called and emailed the assignment editors the day before the action?
  - Prepared a release for distribution on the day of the action?
  - Assigned someone to talk with the media at the event? (your spokesperson may be busy)
- Have you selected someone to take notes during the meeting and write the confirmation letter to the target?
- Do you know who will debrief the action with participants and where the debriefing will occur?

## PTA Takes Action Together to Invest in the Health, Educational Success and Well-Being of Every Child

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated the many inequities which have long existed within our education system. The inequities are unacceptable. This next phase of 'returning to school' is an important chance to ensure every child has every opportunity to reach their fullest potential, regardless of their zip code. Our members of Congress have the power to help ensure the educational success of all children and make every child's potential a reality in our nation. National PTA and our 3 million members across the country advocate together, with one voice, to ensure that every child has access to a fair and equitable education in the United States.

### **That is why today, PTA is calling upon our Members of Congress to:**

1. Make meaningful, robust investments in education in the next COVID relief package
2. Increase funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers to \$20 million
3. Include schools in any comprehensive infrastructure package
4. Improve the federal school meal program through Child Nutrition Reauthorization
5. Support policies which protect all students, including students from historically marginalized populations and communities

## 1. Make meaningful, robust investments in education in the next COVID relief package.

National PTA appreciates the education-related funding which Congress provided in the last COVID relief package. However, children, families, educators and public schools are still facing numerous critical and immediate needs, which must be addressed in the next COVID relief package. Schools across our nation must have support to address the safe transition back to school, the trauma of the pandemic and the myriad of instructional issues, including the effects of learning loss and the digital divide. As such, **PTA urges our members of Congress to quickly pass a robust COVID relief package that addresses five key areas:**

- Funding to reopen schools safely for in-person instruction and ensure the health of all students and educators;
- Increased support for Title I and dedicated IDEA funding;
- Dedicated funding for remote learning;
- Additional resources for family engagement in education; and
- Increased funding for child nutrition programs.

## 2. Increase funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers to at least \$20 million.

The Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) is a bipartisan program that provides competitive federal grants to statewide entities to promote and implement evidence-based family engagement strategies that further the academic progress of our nation's children. **PTA urges our members of Congress to increase funding for this program to at least \$20 million in FY 2022** and put this program on a funding path to ensure that all families across the country have access to the program in the coming years.

- Research has shown that family engagement in a child's education increases student achievement, improves attendance, reduces the dropout rate, and advances the emotional and physical well-being of children. Students whose families are involved in their education attend school more regularly, earn better grades, enroll in more challenging academic programs, and have higher graduation rates.
- Currently, SFECs are supporting children and families in [13 states](#) across the country. Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, families without a center in their state have not been able to benefit from this program.
- The SFECs program harnesses effective practices to help schools and districts implement systematic family engagement programs that build ties between the community, families, students and schools.
- According to a [Rice University study](#), family engagement is the most important driver of a parent's satisfaction with their child's school, yet school districts frequently fail to offer parents a voice in the education system. SFECs can provide critical professional development to school leaders and teachers on effective family engagement strategies.
- As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, SFECs can help teachers be the conduit for learning at home and provide families with simple and effective activities they can do with their children, so that families aren't overwhelmed by the myriad of resources available. Equally important is the ability of SFECs to directly and effectively connect with low-income families, students learning English and other marginalized student groups who are most likely to be impacted by school closures to ensure that equity is at the forefront of online and other substitute school educational offerings.

### 3. Include schools in any comprehensive infrastructure package.

National PTA supports the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 2021. Crumbling school facilities pose significant health and safety threats to more than 50 million students and 3 million teachers in public schools. The average school building is roughly 44 years old; across the country, students and educators are learning and working in crumbling buildings with asbestos, contaminated water and mold. While the pandemic is highlighting the urgent need for major repairs to school facilities, states are confronting unprecedented budget shortfalls and schools are facing painful funding cuts that undermine their ability to address these challenges on their own. As such, **PTA urges our members of Congress to cosponsor and pass the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 2021.**

The Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 2021 would:

- Invest \$100 billion in grants and \$30 billion in bond authority targeted at high-poverty schools with facilities that pose health and safety risks to students and staff;
- Create over 2 million jobs based on an Economic Policy Institute analysis that each \$1 billion spent on construction creates 17,785 jobs;
- Allocate 2021 program dollars on an emergency basis to aid in safely reopening public schools in line with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) public health guidelines—such as for heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems;
- Require states to develop comprehensive statewide public databases on the condition of public-school facilities; most states do not track school facility conditions and would provide much-needed insight into the condition of our public schools; and
- Expand access to high-speed broadband to ensure that public schools have the reliable and high-speed internet access they need for digital learning.<sup>i</sup>

## 4. Improve the federal school meal program through Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

National PTA has always recognized that children need access to nutritious foods and beverages to thrive in and out of the classroom, and we have a proud legacy of leading the federal school meal program. The health of students and their academic achievement are inextricably linked. Improved health and well-being for students has been associated with increased likelihood for college and career readiness and post-secondary academic success, as well as reduced risk for premature death, particularly among communities of color. Similarly, healthy students miss fewer days of school and are more able to learn, creating a feedback loop that can either position students to succeed or hold back their potential. **PTA urges our members of Congress to extend the child nutrition waivers and to reauthorize the child nutrition program.**

- The nationwide child nutrition program waivers issued in 2020 have allowed the school meal programs to respond to the pandemic; Congress should extend that waiver authority to allow child nutrition programs to better meet the needs of struggling families through the next school year and beyond.
- Congress must reassert its authority over the federal school meal program and reauthorize the child nutrition program to ensure food served in schools meets the highest nutritional standards. Over the last few years, the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 has been subject to repeated regulatory rollbacks, weakening standards for milk, whole grains and sodium served to children.

## 5. Support policies which protect all students, including students from historically marginalized populations.

PTA firmly believes that all students—including students from historically marginalized populations and communities—have the right to a quality, equitable education in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment. In pursuit of this goal, PTA has long supported legislation and policies which prohibit aversive discipline in schools that disproportionately harms students of color and students from other marginalized populations and communities. **As such, we urge our members of Congress to introduce and pass both the Keeping all Students Safe Act and the Protecting our Students in Schools Act.**

- The Keeping all Students Safe Act (KASSA) would ban the use of seclusion in schools, ban dangerous restraint practices and prohibit schools from physically restraining children, except when necessary to protect students and staff. The use of restraint and seclusion in schools has been shown to cause trauma, injury and death. These practices must be ended.<sup>ii</sup>
- The Protecting our Students in Schools Act would ban the use of corporal punishment in schools. Substantial research has demonstrated that corporal punishment in schools is not associated in any way with improved student behavior, instead producing similar outcomes to children that suffer physical abuse. Corporal punishment, or the act of inflicting physical pain on a student's body as a form of discipline, can result in serious physical injury to the student, including abrasions, broken bones, bruising, hematomas and other medical complications. A federal ban on this practice would protect students and encourage the adoption of nonharmful, productive disciplinary practices.<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/2021-01-28%20Reopen%20and%20Rebuild%20America%20Schools%20Act%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/2020-11-19%20Keeping%20All%20Students%20Safe%20Act%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://mceachin.house.gov/media/press-releases/mceachin-bonamici-unveil-legislation-end-corporal-punishment-schools>

## INCLUSIVITY TOOL: CHECKLIST OF BEHAVIORS

The following is a checklist of **Inclusive Behaviors** that should be actively reinforced and those that should be **actively discouraged** within a company, association, or organization as it relates to inclusivity and belonging.

Examples of inclusive behaviors that should be reinforced:

- Going out of the way to make others feel welcome.
- Showing genuine concern towards team members.
- Adjust your message for your audience.
- Being aware of unconscious bias.
- Making an extra effort to understand problems faced by others
- Efforts to uncover opposing or alternative views in order to try to better understand and solve problems.
- Reach out to untapped population groups, associations, and organizations for relationship and community building.
- Balance advocacy with inquiry.
- Review diversity calendars prior to planning events.
- Listen louder and harder- slow down and listen actively
- Giving team members the benefit of the doubt. (ie. The potential value that they can contribute to the team.)
- Being critical of underlying assumptions when drawing conclusions about each other.

Examples of behaviors that should be **actively discouraged**:

- Downplaying the value of others' contributions
- Exhibiting/displaying microaggressions toward others.
- Invalidating lived experiences
- Withholding information from others
- Belittling someone's ideas in front of others.
- Being condescending or demanding toward others.

## TOOL: STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING INCLUSION AND TRUST IN GROUPS

The following is a list of recommended strategies to foster inclusion and greater trust at the immediate workgroup level. Use this list as a springboard for discussion within your workgroup.

- Create task and goal interdependence among group members, and emphasize the necessity of all roles. Consider breaking the group into smaller groups (two or three people) to work on tasks, and rotate membership in these smaller groups so that subgroups don't form. People tend to be more willing to take risks and express opinions in smaller groups.
- Allow the group to develop a shared history by minimizing membership changes and recognizing team accomplishments.
- Facilitate contact and communication among group members. Focus time on team building so that individuals can discover similarities and create interpersonal bridges.
- Establish strong norms about protecting psychological safety and then hold people accountable. Emphasize the importance of adopting a learning mindset and give people real-time permission to voice disagreement respectfully.
- Teach people to give and receive feedback in a caring way, without taking it personally.
- Consider designating someone as the group's official advocate of candor. This person's role would be to speak up when something has been left unsaid and help people recognize when their communication style may be hindering candor.
- Consider allowing non-experts to talk first. When experts speak first, the rest are more likely to conform to their views. If you create the space for non-experts to speak first, it's more likely that new ideas will be unearthed.
- During meetings, be sure to set aside time to stop and ask what might be missing from the conversation. Doing so provides opportunities for people to voice discrepant views without worrying about appearing disagreeable.

**Source:** Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations

# Michigan PTA 2021 Advocacy Asks

## Michigan PTA Takes Action Together to achieve the Education, Educational Success and Well-Being of Every Child.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated the many inequities which have long existed within our education system. The inequities are unacceptable. This next phase of 'returning to school' is an important chance to ensure every child has every opportunity to reach their fullest potential, regardless of their zip code. The State Legislature, District and School Board teams, and educational professionals have the power to help ensure the educational success of all children and make every child's potential a reality in Michigan. Michigan PTA and our many members across the state advocate together, with one voice, to ensure that every child has access to a fair and equitable education in Michigan and across the United States.

That is why today, Michigan PTA is calling upon our Members of our State Legislature, school districts, and schools to:

1. Make needed investments in education for continued COVID relief to Michigan Schools to provide a safe environment and maximize education delivery for our children, teachers, and administrators across the state.
2. Include parents and families in communication and decision making at the state, district, and local school level as we continue to adapt and adjust our school's education delivery, content, education requirements, and resources in the future.
3. To remove mandatory grade retention component of the Michigan third grade reading assessment law, especially in this year of Covid-19 education hardships for students and educators in Michigan.

# Michigan PTA 2021 Advocacy Asks

## **1. Make needed investments in education for continued COVID relief to Michigan Schools to provide a safe environment and maximize education delivery for our children, teachers, and administrators across the state.**

Michigan PTA appreciates the education-related funding which the federal and state government has provided thus far in COVID relief packages. However, children, families, educators and public schools are still facing numerous critical and immediate needs, which must be addressed with additional COVID relief packages. Schools across Michigan must have support to address the safe transition back to school, the trauma of the pandemic and the myriad of instructional issues, including the effects of learning loss and the digital divide.

As such, Michigan PTA urges our state legislature to quickly pass robust COVID relief packages that addresses five key areas:

- Funding to reopen schools safely for in-person instruction and ensure the education of all students and educators;
- Increased support for Title I and dedicated IDEA funding;
- Dedicated funding for remote learning;
- Additional resources for family engagement in education; and
- Increased funding for child nutrition programs.

To encourage improvement in student education across the state we ask the Michigan legislature to:

- SUPPORT - \$250 million in FY21 supplemental for "student recovery services." Research-based best practices to support academic recovery funding.
- SUPPORT - \$1.5 million from Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund for MI Center for Education Research & Implementation (MCERI) to lead the replication and scaling of best practices in instruction, administration, and student support, beginning first with the recommendations of the state's COVID-19 Student Recovery Advisory Council.

(last revised 3/19/2021)

# Michigan PTA 2021 Advocacy Asks

## **2. Include parents and families in communication and decision-making at the state, district, and local school levels as we continue to adapt and adjust our schools' education delivery, content, education requirements, and resources in the future.**

The Michigan Legislature, school districts and school staff need to connect and build positive relationships with parents to effectively engage parents in improving school education programs and activities. First, it is essential for school staff, parents, and community partners to recognize the advantages of working together to guide children's education and learning. The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting changes due to school shutdowns brought the need for **timely parent involvement and communication in the decision making process** for our schools and children's education.

The Michigan Department of Education has been promoting a [Parent Engagement Took Kit](#), last updated 9/29/2015, with detailed information for improving parent, school staff, district information communication and parent engagement. A key item is "Developing a parent engagement policy or plan does not have to be a complex activity. There are many ways and tools to accomplish the task. However, the plan you ultimately develop should be a true reflection of your school's/district's commitment to collaborate with all parents and families to increase the academic achievement and success of all children."

The Michigan PTA urges our state legislature to identify programs and recommendations that:

- Have all state education committees and tasks forces identify a parent engagement process and activities. Reach out to state parent organizations for involvement.

The Michigan PTA urges our school districts to identify programs and recommendations that:

- School administrators can enhance staff knowledge, ability, and confidence to engage parents by ensuring ample opportunities for professional development on effective parent engagement strategies. Identify parent engagement policies and communication at the district level.
- School staff can be given dedicated time to plan and organize parent-friendly activities and events.

(last revised 3/19/2021)

*For the purposes of this document, the word parent is used to refer to the adult primary caregiver(s) of a child's basic needs (e.g., feeding, safety). This includes biological parents; other biological relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings; and non-biological parents such as adoptive, foster, or stepparents. Parents guide the child's upbringing, which includes the interaction processes between parent and child that contribute to the child's emotional and social development.*

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# Michigan PTA 2021 Advocacy Asks

## **3. To remove the mandatory grade retention component of the Michigan third grade reading assessment law<sup>1</sup> for 2020-21, especially in this year of Covid-19 education hardships for students and educators in Michigan.**

Schools in Michigan completely shut down in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our schools, educators, administration, families, and students navigated the changes in education with hardworking, positive intentions. Lives have already been upended this year and education systems have been significantly disrupted. Children should not be retained in the third grade if they do not meet the required standards in the Michigan Third Grade Reading Law. Do not penalize children, families, and our educators for circumstances beyond their control.

The Michigan PTA asks that:

- Remove the mandatory grade retention component of the Michigan third grade reading assessment law for 2021-22.
- Support reading assessments as tools for educators, administrators, and families for identifying how students are performing and in development of education planning for children.
- Support Senate Bill 199, introduced by Senator Dayna Polehanki on March 4, 2021, in working to remove the mandatory grade retention from the third grade reading assessment.

(last revised 3/19/2021)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/third-grade-reading/>

# Planning a meeting with your State Representative or State Senator is as easy as ABC

Michigan PTA



## A. Plan out your meeting

- Determine who you want to contact – look up the contact information for your legislative person. Michigan PTA Members can find both State and Federal Contacts at <https://www.votervoice.net/MIPTA/home>
- Decide What do you want to share or discuss with your State Representative or State Senator.
  - Look to the following areas for suggestions and ideas
  - Current Michigan PTA Asks for advocacy goals and issues. Look at the talking point documents from the State PTA Advocacy Committee. Contact the Michigan PTA to speak to an advocacy committee member at [childadvocacyvp@michiganpta.org](mailto:childadvocacyvp@michiganpta.org) or call [734-975-9500](tel:734-975-9500)
  - Current Michigan PTA Action alters from VoterVoice.
  - Questions or topics that have come to you from your PTA Members.

## B. Contact the legislator's office to set up a meeting

- Select if you wish to meet in their office in Lansing or locally, meet at a coffee or town hall event, have the politician attend your PTA in-person meeting, or plan a virtual meeting. Note Michigan PTA has a zoom account that local PTA leaders can use for virtual meetings; contact [info@michiganpta.org](mailto:info@michiganpta.org) for more information.
- Determine who from the PTA should attend the meeting.
- Have all attendees hold the date and send reminders closer to the meeting.
- Identify the primary spokesperson and host before your meeting.
- Send a brief agenda and handouts to the legislator's office before the meeting.
- When visiting government buildings, you will need to understand their security requirements. Make sure to share those requirements with all attendees.

## C. Have the meeting!

- Confirm talking points and agenda with all attendees.
- Remember, your State Representative and State Senator are friendly people who want to hear your viewpoints.
- End the meeting with any asks you have on issues discussed.
- FOLLOW UP YOUR MEETING WITH A THANK-YOU.
- Let your State PTA Advocacy contact know how the meeting went.