

**National
PTA[®]**



**SCHOOL OF
EXCELLENCE**

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Program Leader Guide

Program Leader Guide

Welcome and congratulations on enrolling in the National PTA School of Excellence program!

The School of Excellence Leader Guide is designed to help local PTAs partner with their school leaders, families, students and community members to improve and promote family-school partnerships.

School of Excellence Program Goals and Objectives

The goal of the School of Excellence program is **to enrich the educational experience and overall well-being of students**. You will achieve that goal by forming family-school partnerships to strengthen family engagement in supporting student and school success.

By participating in this program, your PTA will:

- Help make your school a **more welcoming place for families**.
- Empower families to **become advocates as part of the school decision-making process**.
- Demonstrate to school leaders that **PTA is a key partner** for continuous school improvements.
- Receive **recognition in your community, at the state level and nationwide** for engaging families in a way that makes a substantial, positive impact on your school and student success.

School of Excellence Program Talking Points

Use the following talking points to build your Excellence Team. The members of your Excellence Team will be partners on your journey to excellence, so they should represent your school community (be sure to include PTA members, school administration, teachers, families, students, community members, etc.).

- School of Excellence is a recognition program that supports and celebrates partnerships between local PTAs and schools to enrich the educational experience and overall well-being for all students.



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- At a National PTA School of Excellence, families feel welcomed and empowered to support student success, and PTA is a key partner for continuous school improvement.
- A School of Excellence designation will help attract new, action-oriented PTA members who want to focus on the issues that affect our children the most.
- Being a National PTA School of Excellence will open the door to other honors and opportunities for our school.
- This is a year-long commitment to identify and implement an action plan for school improvement based on [PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#). To learn more about the National Standards visit PTA.org/NationalStandards.
- Throughout the school year, we will use the tools, resources and support provided by National PTA to bring positive change in family engagement.
- In the final step of the program, our work will be evaluated through a Final Application. If our work has resulted in a stronger family-school partnership, we will receive the two-year National PTA School of Excellence distinction and recognition.



SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM STEPS

Step #1: ENROLL AND GAIN SUPPORT

Enroll by October 1

After enrolling in the National PTA School of Excellence program, you can start building an inclusive “Excellence Team” to improve family-school partnerships. This Excellence Team will work together throughout the school year to conduct the National Family-School Partnership Baseline and Final Surveys, set shared priorities for school improvement and oversee the implementation of recommendations in your school’s customized *Roadmap to Excellence* (see step #5).

When recruiting volunteers, consider building a diverse team that is representative of your entire school community. Try to have members that represent families, administrators, staff, student leaders (depending on age) and community members. Diversity enriches the process by bringing a variety of perspectives, connections and ideas to the table.

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Step #2: DEPLOY BASELINE SURVEY

September-November

You and your Excellence Team will deploy National PTA's Baseline Survey questions to your school community—including families, administrators and teachers. The survey questions are based on the [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#): Welcoming All Families, Communicating Effectively, Supporting Student Success, Speaking Up for Every Child, Sharing Power and Collaborating with Community.

The method of how you deploy these questions will be dependent on what works best for your PTA, school and family members. While some PTAs opt to deploy the Baseline Survey by paper, others create an online version of the survey (e.g., SurveyMonkey, Survey Face, Google Forms).

We ask that you do not change or edit the survey questions, as the results will give you a “baseline” to compare your progress to later in the school year.

Step #3: SET A SHARED OBJECTIVE

September-November

After you compile feedback from your school community, the next step is to hold meetings with your Excellence Team and school administrator(s) to analyze what you have learned and discuss ways that your PTA can better engage families throughout the year.

With your school administrator, ask to review your school's continuous improvement plan, if available. Use the school's improvement plan and the results from the Baseline Survey to select a shared objective. Where does your school administrator think that PTA's involvement and enhanced family engagement could make the biggest difference?

You can pick one focus area for family engagement that you plan to concentrate on in the upcoming school year: **education, health & safety or arts**. Within that broad focus area, what is one specific objective that best describes how you will support efforts? Your customized *Roadmap to Excellence* will contain guidance from National PTA and its partners for the focus area and objective you select.



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Choose one focus area and one corresponding objective from the list below.

Focus Area: Improve Education

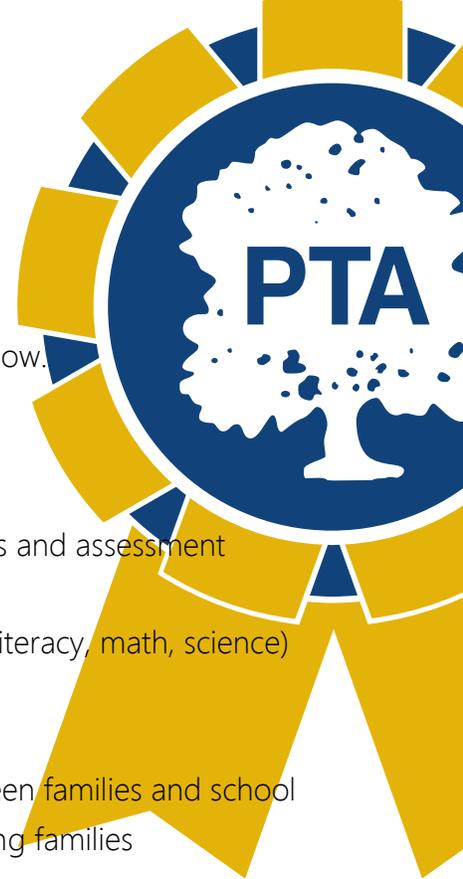
Objectives:

- To support implementation of college- and career-ready standards and assessment (i.e., Common Core State Standards)
- To increase family engagement supporting student success (e.g., literacy, math, science)
- To increase involvement from dads and other male role models
- To create a culture and climate that welcomes all families
- To facilitate consistent meaningful two-way communication between families and school
- To grow volunteer opportunities and volunteer participation among families
- To grow family participation in school wide decision-making
- To prevent school dropouts
- To grow family participation in advocacy
- To engage community partners and raise family awareness of community resources

Focus Area: Ensure Health & Safety of Students

Objectives:

- To promote healthy lifestyles at home and at school
- To customize and implement the local school wellness policies
- To address the problem of hunger among families in the school community
- To prevent injury at home and at school
- To promote Internet safety
- To prevent all forms of bullying and encourage healthy peer relationships
- To support students' emotional and mental well-being
- To advocate for safer routes to school (bicycling, walking, parking, busing)
- To ensure emergency preparedness, school and personal safety
- To prevent student substance use
- To promote teen driver safety
- To improve the environment for students with allergies, asthma, epilepsy, diabetes or other chronic conditions



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Focus Area: Support the Arts

Objectives:

- To increase access to arts programs
- To increase available resources for student learning in the arts (supplies, teacher resources)
- To build successful community partnerships
- To advocate for the values of arts in education

Step #4: COMPLETE INITIAL APPLICATION

Submit by November 1

Once you have analyzed the surveys and determined your shared objective with your school administrator, submit your results online through an Initial Application at [PTA.org/ExcellenceTools](https://pta.org/ExcellenceTools).

Upon submission, you will receive a customized *Roadmap to Excellence*, which contains specific recommendations that respond directly to the survey results you shared and focus area you identified. You can expect your *Roadmap to Excellence* to arrive in your email inbox within hours after you submit your application—possibly even minutes. Be sure to check your spam folder if you don't see it! **Only applications submitted online by the due date will be considered for this cycle of award recipients.**

Step #5: FOLLOW YOUR ROADMAP TO EXCELLENCE

Throughout School Year

Once you have your *Roadmap to Excellence*, your Excellence Team will determine which of the customized recommendations will have the greatest impact on increasing family engagement and achieving results. Then, you will develop and implement an action plan to address barriers and expand methods for effective family and community engagement.

As priorities shift throughout the school year, don't be afraid to reassess and revise your action plan in partnership with school and PTA leadership.

National PTA is with you every step of the way, providing ongoing support, technical assistance, training and answers to your questions.



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Visit [PTA.org/ExcellenceTools](https://www.pta.org/excellence), email Excellence@PTA.org or call (800) 307-4782 for answers or solutions to any questions or concerns.

Step #6: DEPLOY FINAL SURVEY

March-June

Towards the end of the school year, you will conduct a Final Survey to gather feedback from your school community and evaluate your progress over the school year. Once you have the results from the Final Survey, analyze them with your Excellence Team and school administrator to determine a new focus area for the following school year (essentially, you will be repeating step #2 and step #3, except you'll be using the new Final Survey Questions).

Step #7: COMPLETE FINAL APPLICATION

Submit by June 1

Only applications submitted online by the due date will be considered for this cycle of award recipients.

Visit [PTA.org/ExcellenceTools](https://www.pta.org/excellence) to complete the National PTA School of Excellence Final Application online. You will provide the results of your Final Survey, a new focus area for the upcoming school year and brief, supporting narratives. This is a chance to highlight your excellence! Once you submit the Final Application, you will receive a new *Roadmap to Excellence: Are We There Yet?* guide that corresponds to your new focus area to continue the momentum in engaging families.

Step #8: CELEBRATE YOUR EXCELLENCE

August

A team of National PTA volunteers will review your applications. The National School of Excellence designation will be awarded to those **PTAs and schools that meet a specific threshold or make significant improvements in strengthening their family-school partnership.**

The review process will consider the fact that all PTAs and schools are starting at different levels of existing family engagement and have varying resources.



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This approach helps to even the playing field and ensure that all PTAs can participate and achieve excellence.

If you are awarded the National PTA School of Excellence designation, you will receive information on how to plan your school and community celebrations.

You also will receive a **banner** to hang prominently at your school.

Your school will carry this designation for two years. National PTA School of Excellence recipients are recognized in several ways, such as promotion in national media outlets, on the National PTA website and at National and state PTA conventions.

Designated Schools of Excellence will automatically qualify for consideration of the [Phoebe Apperson Hearst Award](#)—National PTA’s highest honor—which includes a \$2,000 grant.

Schools that do not qualify for the National PTA School of Excellence designation will receive a National PTA Certificate of Merit and a *Roadmap to Excellence: Are We There Yet?* guide to continue their momentum. National PTA will provide support to help them overcome barriers along the way as they continue to pursue excellence during the following school year.

We look forward to working with you to make this vision a reality!

NEED HELP?

National PTA helps you every step of the way with templates, training and tools.

Visit [PTA.org/ExcellenceTools](https://pta.org/ExcellenceTools), email Excellence@PTA.org or call (800) 307-4782.

