

1, 2, 3 Ways to Get Men More Involved in PTAs

How can we get more men involved? National PTA surveyed nearly 2,700 men in fall 2004 to find out. The findings from that survey have been distilled to 10 ways a local PTA can break down barriers to male involvement and increase male PTA membership.

1. Make the membership pitch relevant to males.

The number one reason why survey respondents joined PTA was "to work to improve the school for the benefit of my child/children." Therefore, your recruitment materials and your membership pitch should explain how men's involvement in PTA would benefit their children and their children's schools. A dad's involvement in PTA:

- Shows added interest in his child's education and school activities;
- Shows greater support for his child's teachers and school; and
- Improves relationships between parents and school personnel.

Use specific messaging and advertising aimed at men.

When asked what would encourage men to join PTA, men most frequently answered male-oriented advertising. Eighty-seven percent of the men surveyed believe that PTA values men, but 67 percent don't believe PTA does a good job promoting male involvement. Be sure to show men's involvement in your PTA in your communications to members and potential members.

Just ask them.

Nearly half of the men who responded to the survey said men don't join PTA because they aren't asked. Just asking could pay big dividends in membership recruitment for your PTA! Tips on making "the ask" successful are available in the Go Ahead and Ask handout in the 2005 Annual Resources for PTAs.

2. Ask the women in your PTA to invite the men in their children's lives to join PTA.

Research reveals that women can influence men to join PTA. More than 90 percent of male PTA members indicated in the survey that their spouses, who were already members, contributed largely to their involvement in PTA. Yet both mom and dad are PTA members in less than 50 percent of families with children in school.

Create more volunteer opportunities and special events for dads.

Survey respondents stated a preference for hands-on projects and suggested events such as "dads only" events, school carnivals, sports activities, father-daughter and father-son activities, and back-to-school fests.

Seek male members in the community.

Instead of waiting for men to come to your PTA, take your PTA to where men often meet. Present the PTA message at local service clubs that have a large male contingent, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions clubs. If men see that other club members support PTA's work, they might be more likely to join.

3 Emphasize that becoming a PTA member doesn't necessarily involve a large time commitment.

Seventy-one percent of the males surveyed indicated that "time" is a barrier to male involvement in PTA. It doesn't have to be, though. When talking about time, they were referring to the time necessary to volunteer. Assure new members that membership is not synonymous with volunteering. Keep this in mind: If they join, they may eventually become volunteers; but if they never become members, they'll never become volunteers.

Give it to 'em straight.

Almost half of the men surveyed indicated that they want volunteer roles and expectations clearly defined. Telling them the what, when, where, why, and how would make them more likely to join and to volunteer.

Communicate with men the way they want to be reached.

Men want fewer meetings, and they want the meetings PTAs do have to be at more convenient times, such as after work. In addition, men want meetings to have a clear agenda and be results-oriented, rather than exploratory sessions on an issue or topic. Men prefer to receive PTA communications in bulleted lists, as summary points, in e-mails, or as quick bits of information in newsletters.

Above all after you get them, Recognize and celebrate them.

Publicize your successes. When you start getting more men involved in your PTA, let the community know. Success begets success. Reinforcing men's contributions, while being mindful of what all members do for PTA, creates a positive atmosphere. Recognize members, thank them often, and celebrate your PTA's accomplishments and success!