Utah PTA Commissioners Newsletter

March 2021

Utah PTA —
Building Bridges of Understanding

A Combined Effort - Each One of US!!
The year is almost done...
But we are still here to help you!

We are still here waiting to help you! We can come to a meeting or talk to you on the phone!
We have many resources to share with you and your school community!
Let us know how we can help make the end of the year, one to remember!

Do you want to do programs and events but don’t know how to get one started!
• Utah PTA Commissioners are here to help!
• We can come to you and present a program or help you work out the details to get a program or event started
• Or we can connect you with some of our great outside resources to help you put on some fantastic programs!
• Contact one of us! Our info is at the end of this newsletter!

Things to not forget these last few months of the school year:

ORGANIZE YOUR PTA FILES AND STORAGE
This is a great time to go through your files and purge unnecessary items. Get rid of mangled decorations, boxes of old school directories, unwanted supplies, posters that announce activities your group hasn’t sponsored in ages, and piles of unneeded files. After you clean out the cabinet, file drawers, or closet, write an inventory list of the major items in each place and tape it to the inside of the door or drawer.

COLLECT PROJECT/COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS
To avoid the loss of important PTA leader binders, collect the binders before school lets out. It’s easier to track down the fundraising chairperson and those files now than it will be in the fall when your new chairperson is trying to get organized.

ENCOURAGE YEAR-END ASSESSMENTS OF EACH COMMITTEE, PROJECT AND YEAR AS THE PTA
Ask your committee chairs to complete a year-end assessment. Do a year end assessment of your membership to capture important information such as tips for success, pitfalls to avoid, email addresses, volunteer information, phone numbers and any other information you wish you would have had to start the school year off right.

Connect with Commissioners... and Other Leaders of Utah PTA

www.utahpta.org

Facebook - Utah PTA Page, Utah PTA Excellent Elementary Group, Utah PTA Super Secondary Group, Utah PTA Advocacy Group

Instagram  Twitter  Pinterest  YouTube
Utah PTA @UtahPTAOneVoice Utah PTA Utah PTA One Voice
Community Engagement Commission

Thank you to all of you that participated in PTA’s Take Your Family to School Week Feb. 14-21, 2021 designed to provide families with an opportunity to get more involved in their child’s education and strengthen their partnerships with teachers and administrators. Research shows that family engagement supports student success. Students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and pass their classes, attend school regularly, have better social skills and go on to post-secondary education.

Coming up: Teacher Appreciation Week, May 3-7, 2021! Get emoji-ational with us and #ThankATeacher Teachers change the lives of millions of children every day—their immense work and impact moves us beyond words, so we need emojis to say how we feel. And with the abrupt end to the physical school year, our teachers have done even more to continue education with virtual classrooms and learning at home lessons. All to ensure every student has the tools they need to reach their full potential.

So, let’s all shower teachers in appreciation and share how we love (❤️) love (👍), celebrate (🎉) and care for (💖) our teachers!

It’s in these challenging times that we truly recognize and appreciate how our Utah’s educators play such a pivotal role in our children’s lives—inspiring a lifelong love of learning and discovery and making a difference in their well-being and long-term success.

Here are some ideas to help you "THANK" the awesome teachers and volunteers in your schools.

Go to our Community Engagement Website
www.utahpta.org
https://www.utahpta.org/teacher-appreciation-week
https://www.pta.org/home/events/PTA-Teacher-Appreciation-Week

Male Engagement Specialist

Male engagement at an early age can give kids a head start and prepare them to excel once they start school. In an article by Dr. Dana Suskind on the BROWN CENTER CHALKBOARD* entitled, “The Power of Dads in Childhood Development—During a Pandemic and Beyond,” she states:

So it’s no surprise that the literature, which includes both correlational and causal studies, has demonstrated that when dads actively engage with their babies and toddlers, they positively impact their children across a wide range of outcomes—including cognitive, language, and executive function skills. For example, one 2006 study found that three-year-olds scored higher on cognitive exams when their fathers engaged positively with them during playtime—by responding to their children’s signals and building on skills the child already showed—than toddlers whose fathers were excessively negative or controlling while playing. Other research has shown that toddlers whose fathers read to them as infants scored higher on language assessments.

As a stay at home dad I took it upon myself to teach my kids to read. A friend recommended a book called, “Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons,” by Siegfried Engelmann. Although it wasn’t always easy as the title indicates, I trudged through the lessons with each of my children. 3 of my 4 children were reading before kindergarten, and one of my children may require therapy because I became so frustrated at times. I learned that it is important to know when to back off and just concentrate on the basics. I am happy to let you know that my son is now in 6th grade and loves reading, so I didn’t ruin him completely. While actually teaching their kids to read may be a lot to ask for many dads and other male role models, it’s clear that by encouraging them to read to and engage with their children positively at an early age, they can have a huge influence on their future success.

I want to share some information about a group that sometimes gets overlooked when parties or events are planned. Children with food allergies are too often excluded during these activities. With a little awareness, we can make sure that students with food allergies can be safe and included in the fun along with their classmates. Here’s some helpful information from FARE – Food Allergy Research and Education. Below are just a few tips to get started. For more information, go to FARE’s website at foodallergy.org where you can find ideas for non-food rewards, advice on dealing with allergic reactions, current statistics, and much more.

### Food Allergies: What PTOs and PTAs Need to Know

**Food Allergy Tips for Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)**

Today, one in 13 children has food allergies, and nearly 40 percent of these children have experienced a severe or life-threatening reaction. Many of these reactions happen at school. Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) are a vital part of the school community, providing an organized family and community component. As a PTO or PTA leader, you can be a powerful voice for your children and other children, advocating for their health, safety, education and overall well-being.

Children with food allergies need your support to ensure their safety and inclusion. From classroom parties, to school family nights, to after-school fundraisers, keep in mind that all students in the community should be able to participate safely.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published National Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools, available at www.foodallergy.org/CDC. The recommendations below are a few examples of recommended practices to help ensure students with food allergies are safely included. We encourage you to review the complete list of the CDC’s Recommended Practices, on pages 41–43 of the guidelines available at www.foodallergy.org/CDC.

- Avoid the use of identified allergens in class parties, holidays, celebrations, crafts, snacks or rewards.
- Use non-food incentives for prizes, gifts, awards, and fundraisers.
- When possible, avoid ordering foods from restaurants because food allergens may be present, but unrecognized.
- Have ingredient information readily available for all pre-packaged and/or catered food items.
- Do not exclude children with food allergies from events or extra-curricular activities.
- Make sure that food allergy policies and practices address foods available during fundraisers, class parties, at athletic events and during after-school programs.
- Have rapid access to epinephrine auto-injectors in cases of emergency and train staff to use them.

### Family Life Commission

Learning doesn’t stop once your child leaves the classroom. In fact, your child’s academic success requires that they study at home and get support and encouragement from family members.

A few things you should be doing:

- **Supervise homework:** Know what your child has been assigned, how much your child has done and whether your child needs extra help. Request a curriculum outline from the teacher, so that you can help your child prepare in advance for classes and tests.
- **Create a quiet place to read and study:** Insist that your child turn off the TV and put away their cell phone while studying. Create a designated, quiet, comfortable and well-lit space in the house just for studying.
- **Teach organizational skills:** The older your child gets, the more work and activities they need to balance. Make sure your child has a daily planner (this could be an app on their phone) and teach them to write down all commitments, plan ahead and check things off as they go. Teach your child how to prioritize and meet deadlines. If your child struggles with procrastination, help them break large tasks into smaller ones that seem more manageable.
- **Get extra help sooner rather than later:** If your child is struggling, don’t wait to inquire about after-school tutoring and counseling. If the school doesn’t offer these, they should make other recommendations. You can also talk to the teacher about an individualized learning plan, so you can both better monitor your child’s progress.
- **Family involvement:** Families can play a major role in academic success. Aunts, uncles, grandparents and other adults in your child’s life should grab every opportunity to let them know that education is important, that they have high expectations for your child, and that they’re available to help. Adults in the house should help your child set goals and encourage them to create a plan of action, whether that’s getting up on time, improving classroom attendance, starting assignments further in advance, raising their grades one step at a time or finding study partners at school.

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Ideas to Keep Your Children Safe Online

1. Strive to establish a personal relationship with each of your children. Some ideas to do this include:
   a. Eat family dinner together every night and talk about the events of the day.
   b. Spend at least ten minutes a day focusing on each child individually.
   c. Do something fun with your child each week that interests them.
   d. Encourage each child to come talk with you about things that are upsetting them (whether online or offline)

2. Have family meetings where you set rules and review rules about online safety. Possible topics to discuss might include:
   a. Setting times to use technology. (Willpower is low late at night.)
   b. Establishing areas of the home that are technology-free zones, like the bedroom or bathroom.
   c. Establishing designated media rooms in high-traffic areas
   d. Having a check-in location for devices at night where they can be charged.
   e. Deciding who should be followed on social media.
   f. Selecting which apps are good for children at different ages. (Realize that there is no current standard for rating apps. All apps rate themselves and many of these ratings are completely inaccurate.)
   g. Using technology to block inappropriate websites or apps using filters or parent review options.
   h. Choosing the types and ratings of video games to be allowed.
   i. Selecting the types of books to be read online. (FanFiction websites and others can have a wide variety of books that may not fit your family standards. Some anime books contain sexual topics and pornographic drawings for example.)
   j. Discussing how to respond to inappropriate texts, pictures or cyberbullying.
   k. Setting consequences for breaking family rules.
   l. Being intentional with device usage. Avoid surfing the web without a specific purpose in mind. Decide what you will do on your device and how much time you will spend, before getting on your device.
   m. Limiting the use of technology when you are feeling bored, lonely, angry, anxious, stressed, or tired.

3. Monitor with love
   a. Remember to give your children a hug every day and tell them you love them.
   b. Check phones periodically to make sure children are obeying the phone rules. Follow through with consequences, when rules are disobeyed. Be consistent about the rules.
   c. Be aware that students can install VPNs (Virtual Private Networks) to get around filters. This is an easy app to download free from the app store. It also makes the phone invisible to your browser. So if you have a filter that tracks your children’s browsing history, and their history quits appearing, they might have a VPN.

None of us are perfect. As I am researching ideas for this list, I am finding ways that I can improve as a parent and as a media user. I will be setting new goals this week. Thanks for being dedicated and devoted parents.

Military Family Specialist

APRIL is the Month of the Military Child... Let’s Celebrate and Show our Support!!

Did you know that there are approximately 1.7 million military children that are school-aged? Of that number, more than 765,000 military children have active duty parents, and more than 200,000 have a parent who is currently deployed. We have about 18,000 school aged military children in Utah! In honor of their resilience and sacrifices, Utah PTA has proclaimed April as the Month of the Military Child. Each April, America honors the courage and recognizes the sacrifice of over 1.7 million children in military families nationwide. As part of a military family, these children are also “serving” their country!
The Month of the Military Child provides a powerful opportunity to raise awareness and build support to help these children meet the unique challenges they face! The life of military children has always had its challenges, foremost among them being frequent relocations and separations. It is an opportunity to recognize military children and youth for their heroism, character, courage, sacrifices and continued resilience.

Ideas to Celebrate the Month of the Military Child:

1. If you can, have a Patriotic Assembly, with the whole school wearing a camouflage ribbon or an article of clothing that is camouflage, or red, white or blue. Please contact me for assembly step by step planning and ideas.
2. Have students create artwork during April that promotes patriotism and display it.
3. Encourage the reading of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.
4. Read, discuss and/or act out a Patriotic story in the classroom during the month of April. Video it to share.
5. Invite a student’s military family member to class to explain what their military service meant/means.
6. Make a patriotic video. It could be of all the kids and teachers who are military connected and show it.
7. Have students write a paper on “Serving our Nation” by interviewing a former or current service member.
8. Sing a patriotic song at the beginning of class and/or play a patriotic song throughout the school.
9. Have students write a paragraph, poem or short story about, “Why I am Grateful to Those in Military Service.”
10. Have students write a letter, as a class or individually, to a service member. (Mailing addresses can be provided!)

Please join Utah PTA in Celebration of the Military Child by doing something patriotic in your school during April, the month of the Military Child!! Please contact me for questions or more information.

Family Engagement Specialist

Parents and their children are the consumers of our nation’s public education system, and parents have always been essential partners in education. However, they haven’t always been included at the decision-making table. This has caused confusion, mistrust and backlash when new initiatives—whether at the federal, state or local level—have been considered and implemented. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides a unique opportunity for parents and families to give their input and to hold states and districts accountable for their children’s educational experience. Finally if you have questions related to family engagement or would just like to take family engagement in your PTA to the next level, please contact me Marianne McGregor Guelker at (801)577-9775 or familyengagement@utahpta.org. Go PTA! Go family engagement!

Health Commission

The Utah PTA and Utah Strong Recovery Project Outreach

The Utah Strong Recovery Project is a free and confidential FEMA program that helps anyone in Utah experiencing anxiety, challenges functioning, depression, loneliness, or stress during the Covid19 pandemic. Referrals to community resources are available.

You can talk with FEMA-trained counselors on the statewide Helpline at 385-386-2289 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week. Counselors can schedule in-person and online sessions with students, teachers and parents to provide emotional support and offer coping and problem-solving strategies. The Utah PTA is working with Utah Strong to schedule online education/support sessions for each of the 21 PTA regions. Stay tuned!
Individual Development Commission

What is the Utah PTA Arts Education Grant?
It is a fund that supports local PTA efforts for arts education activities in their school. Funds are granted one dollar for each dollar (1:1) contributed by the local PTA unit, up an amount set by the Utah PTA Art Education Grant Committee. Any local PTA/PTSA in good standing (current bylaws, current membership, beginning and end of year paperwork submitted) is eligible to apply. The grant may be used for the creation or enhancement of an existing PTA arts program or project, musical scores, instruments, theater rights, props, scenery, and costuming, expertise to support student performances and productions or any other art program needs. You are only limited by your imagination. You may not use this grant on general art supplies. The supplies must be specific to the approved project.

What is the Utah PTA Arts Supplies Grant?
This grant supports the supplies needed to run a PTA/PTSA art program and/or project. Funds will not be granted to a school run or community run program. Funds are granted one dollar for each dollar (1:1) contributed by the local PTA unit. Funds may be used for specific art supplies for your project, Meet the Masters, Great Artist, band and orchestra instruments, etc. The amount of each grant is determined by the Utah PTA Arts Education Grant committee and is dependent on available funds. Recipients are determined by a drawing of eligible applicants.

Apply here: https://www.utahpta.org/arts-education-supplies-grants

Safety Commission

I wanted to remind everyone about the SafeUT App. It is available both in the App Store and Google Play. SafeUT is free and confidential. The SafeUT Crisis Chat and Tip Line is a statewide service that provides real-time crisis intervention to youth through live chat and a confidential tip program - right from your smartphone. Licensed clinicians in our 24/7 Crisis Line call center respond to all incoming chats and calls by providing supportive or crisis counseling, suicide prevention, and referral services. They can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship problems, mental health, or suicide-related issues. SafeUT answers crisis calls, and chats—about yourself or someone else—24/7. These free services, provided by University of Utah Health, are confidential. Our counseling topics include:

- Depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues;
- Suicide prevention;
- Loss and grief;
- Bullying and cyberbullying;
- Drug and alcohol problems;
- Self-harm;
- Relationship difficulties;
- Any life challenge.

If an “active rescue” is necessary - meaning the crisis counselor believes the user is in immediate danger - the counselor will alert emergency services to attempt a face-to-face safety evaluation based on the information provided by the user.
**Student Leadership Commission**

We had five great guest speakers for our Virtual PTSA Student Days at the Capitol. We recorded all of them, plus a few other presentations from students & leaders across the state. They can be found on the Utah PTA website, [https://www.utahpta.org/day-capitol-student-tracks](https://www.utahpta.org/day-capitol-student-tracks). All of our videos are around the theme “Rise Above.” Highlights from our live guests include:

- **Utah Attorney General General Sean Reyes** – a great get to know you meeting. Sean spoke about a lot of the current issues we are dealing with today, and how we can “rise above” some of the divisiveness.
- **Curtis G. Marsh** – Curtis spoke about rising above the chaos we may have brought into our own lives because of some of our choices, as well as the importance of strong support from friends and family.
- **Carole Gist, Miss USA 1990** – Carole talks about the importance of relationships, and how we can improve them. She also talks about her experience as the first Black Miss USA.
- **Paul Parkinson** – Paul split his comments on service, including examples from his books, and some of the messages from his movie, “Rise Above.” His movie is available for free on YouTube, and was filmed at Pleasant Grove High School in 2012 under the original name, “Nowhere Safe.”
- **Jeanie Cisco-Meth** – Jeanie may not be able to cure COVID, but her presentation can help us overcome a lot of the side effects of living through COVID. She helps us see that our emotions are actually habits, and we can change them and improve our lives.

**Battle of the Bands is happening this year.** We’d like to give a big THANK YOU to all of the schools and regions who have found a way to hold this event. State Battle of the Bands will be April 24, 2021, at SLCC’s Grand Theatre. Tickets will be limited, but it will be a LIVE event. We are especially excited for the first State Open Mike competition that will be a part of it as well.

Look for more information to come out this month on our “Kids helping Kids” campaign with The Christmas Box House. They have locations across the state, so our students will be able to do service for others just like them, right here in Utah.

Lastly, we encourage you to put in place your student leadership for next year at the end of this school year. This will make for an easier transition for the next school year.

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**Advocacy VP**

A great BIG thank you to all who participated during the virtual PTA Day on the Hill or during Utah’s Legislative Session. Through the guidance of the Utah PTA Public Policy Program, the 2020-2021 Utah PTA Legislative Priorities and Utah PTA Resolutions and Position Statements, the Utah PTA takes positions on Bills that will affect children in the areas of Community Involvement, Education, Family Life, Health, Individual Development, Safety, Student Leadership, and School Trust Lands.

Advocates can only speak to issues on behalf of Utah PTA when a resolution voted on by the membership is in place. PTA Members can put forth resolutions they feel are necessary to give PTA members a voice on current policy. Resolutions can be found @ [https://www.utahpta.org/resolutions](https://www.utahpta.org/resolutions)

The bills Utah PTA followed in 2021 can be found here:

Use the interactive bill sheet @ [https://www.utahpta.org/bills](https://www.utahpta.org/bills)

Utah PTA is using the Take Action Network Hub. PTA members in all regions in the state are able to opt-in, in MemberHub. By joining, you are able to receive important legislative alerts from Utah PTA.

If you would like to join the Utah PTA Take Action Network, go to [https://utahpta.memberhub.com/hub/UtahPT44013](https://utahpta.memberhub.com/hub/UtahPT44013)

By joining the Take Action Hub, you are able to receive important legislative alerts from Utah PTA.

If you have any questions please contact LeAnn Wood, the Utah PTA Legislative VP at [Leann@utahpta.org](mailto:Leann@utahpta.org)
Utah PTA Leadershiop Convention

Wednesday and Thursday, May 5th and 6th, 2021
Davis Conference Center at 1651 North 700 West Layton, Utah 84041

Registration for In-Person
- Cost is $80 per person
- Register early March to April 14, 2021
- Lunch options will be $17 each

***Due to Covid, we have decided not to have early bird pricing and allow flexibility in registration.

***Please note: pricing is the lower early bird price

New this year, Virtual Registration Option
- Cost is $80 per person
- Participate in convention from home
- Live feeds of the general membership meetings
- Live and recorded workshops will be available along with a virtual vendor hall
- You can decide if you are virtual or in person at any time up to April 14
- Even if you attend in person, you can watch other recorded workshops after the conference
- Recordings are only available to those who register

Late Registration or Onsite Registration
- Late registration will be April 15 to May 6, 2021
- Cost per person: $100
- No lunch options available

Non PTA members can register at any time for $150

Here is the link to the Utah PTA Leadership Convention
https://www.utahpta.org/leadership-convention

Say yes to Leadership!
Any PTA member can join LAC! It is the 4th Wed from 12-2 at the PTA Office. (Aug- Nov, April) It is every Wed at 12 (Jan-March) at the capital during session.

Interested in a commission or have questions? Wondering about outside resources or partnerships that could help your PTA?

If Yes, contact one of the commissioners! We are happy to help, offer ideas and share resources. We are here to support you!