Building Bridges of Understanding

Let’s start Building our Bridges of Understanding!

Dr. Suzie Hamlin said, “Relationships are like bridges, the stronger they are, the weightier the message that is able to travel safely over them.” Therefore there is a real comparison between how strong a bridge is built and how strong a relationship is built and what that relationship is than able to handle.

So it is important to be able to realistically assess how strong our “bridges” are, what weight of message can travel over it, and what strategies will fortify it.

Some Strategies for Building Bridges of Understanding:

1. It is important to genuinely try to see things from other people's perspectives and put yourself in their shoes.
2. If you need to get something done through someone else, consider how you can help them too, thus creating a “win win” situation.
3. We have two ears and one mouth. We should use them accordingly, listening twice as much as we talk. Asking someone questions, really listening and avoiding the urge to turn the conversation around to you will demonstrate that you are genuinely interested.
4. We think we have heard and understood what others are telling us but so often we have heard it through our own biased opinions. Always check your understanding by saying "so what you mean is...." to see if what you have heard is actually what they have said.

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Commissioners and Specialists of Utah PTA are committed to help "BUILD BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING" throughout the state of Utah.

Over the year, we will use this newsletter to offer ideas, suggestions, resources, trainings and programs to help your PTA, Community and Family with issues such as:

- Bullying
- Preschool and School Readiness
- Parent Engagement
- Student Leadership Opportunities
- School Safety
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
- Student Achievement and High Expectations for All Students.

Each Commission is focused to help your PTA strengthen families in your school community and around Utah by offering programs, resources and tips.

We are here to help!! Please reach out to us for any of your needs.

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 - Utah PTA
Twitter - @UtahPTAOneVoice
Pinterest - Utah PTA
YouTube - Utah PTA One Voice
Community Engagement Commission
The community engagement commission involves all members of the community, business, religious, and government entities in improving the quality of life and education of our children. Working together opens new horizons of possibilities for our future.

It has been a different year with the hit of COVID-19. Let’s work together reminding people to continue washing their hands, wearing a mask, keeping their distance, and staying home if they are not feeling well.

UPLIFT FAMILIES
FREE TIPS Parenting Conference
Sept. 19th 6-7 pm KUTV Channel 2
Concerned about your Kids?
Join us for an inspiring and informative prime-time television event!

Uplift Families is a non-profit 501(c)(3) established by First Lady of Utah Jeanette Herbert to strengthen families by connecting parents with programs, resources and information that help parents acquire the skills necessary to raise loving, responsible children. Uplift Families believes that strong parent-child relationships are the key to providing children with the tools necessary to make safe and healthy choices in their lives, keeping them free of drugs, alcohol, violence, crime and pornography. The Uplift Families program includes web-based resources, social media experiences, educational materials and annual conferences on the family.

www.UpliftFamilies.org provides valuable resources for parents and families.

CENSUS 2020
As you know by now, the census will officially end on September 30, 2020, which could lead to a larger than expected undercount in historically undercounted communities.

Utah participation as of 8/10/20: 67.5%
Utah 2010 final self-response rate 68.6%
Complete the survey in one of 13 languages, online or by phone.
Or by mail.
Online: my2020census.gov
Phone: 844-330-2020
• There is no citizenship question on the Census.
• Your responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone. That means no law enforcement agency, no employer, and no landlord.
• Responding to the 2020 Census helps your community receive its fair share of funding for schools, hospitals, safer roads and access to health clinics.

“COME PLAY WITH PTA”
Check the Utah PTA website for upcoming events. Limited activities because of COVID-19
https://www.utahpta.org/come-play

Male Engagement Specialist
Hello everyone, my name is Jason Nackos and I am the Male Engagement Specialist for Utah PTA this year. I just wanted to share a few thoughts on recruiting males to join your school’s PTA. I know it’s a strange year and in person recruitment might not be possible this year, but here are some things that we’ve done at Mapleton Elementary the past few years to increase our male membership. I suggest getting a couple of outgoing dads to man the membership table at your open house, back to school or whatever you use to recruit membership and have them recruit. Encourage everyone coming through to sign up their spouses. We’ve also done some videos that have brought awareness. Making videos that you can post on social media and send in emails may help in recruitment even more this year considering many won't have in person recruitment opportunities. I’ve provided a link that we set up last year if you are interested in dressing up your recruiter(s). The shirts say, "Real Men Join the PTA." The shirts are priced just to cover the cost of the t-shirt and help other PTAs if they wanted to use them. https://springvillemapletonpta.axomo.com
Special Needs Specialist

12% of students in Utah’s public school system receive special education services or have 504 accommodation plans. That is about 2-3 students per classroom. This is a group that is sometimes overlooked and sometimes has difficulty accessing the same activities as their typical peers. These students are in practically every classroom in the state.

Karen Conder
specialneeds@utahpta.org

Does your local PTA Board have a Special Needs Representative?

A Special Needs Rep on your local PTA board can be a great asset and resource to students with disabilities and their families as well as to your local PTA. Having a Special Needs Rep is a great way to help all families be more included, informed, and involved in the school community and with your PTA.

What would a Special Needs Rep do?

This position could look different at each school, but here are some possibilities:

- Be a communicator, a friend and a contact person. Help make sure that students with special needs and their families receive needed information about activities, events, and the school community.
- Be a go-between person working with the PTA board and the teachers and staff as activities and events are planned. Help with planning and carrying out PTA activities to enable all students and families to participate.
- Consult with teachers and the school nurse to identify general accommodations needed (food allergies, sensory issues, accessibility needs, etc.)

Where to find more info?
Utah PTA website – utahpta.org
Under the Commissions tab, then under Special Needs Specialist find tons of information!

Family Life Commission

The early years of a child’s education have been deemed crucial for building family and school connections. Children whose parents and families are engaged in and hold high expectations of their children’s education tend to earn better grades, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education. Family engagement is essential for every child to have a successful education experience. Take time to think about how your family is doing during this different time, how you are doing as a parent, and what things you can do to promote an environment of learning in your home with your children.

Heidi Grimshaw
heidi@utahpta.org

With a new school year starting and so many things to consider with the current circumstances, here are a few things to contemplate with your children:

Focus on three areas to create a home that nurtures children and encourages them to learn and grow:

1. **Basic Needs:** Helping you meet your family's basic needs.
2. **Character & Values:** Developing and nurturing family values, character, and citizenship.
3. **Learning Skills:** Achieving success and happiness through family involvement in life-long learning.

Look at what and how your family is doing in each of these areas. This list is designed to help you think about what you currently are doing and identify areas where you can improve.

Celebrate and build upon your strengths, and then identify a few places where you want to improve. The important thing is to focus on connections you want to improve and adapt them to your family. You can reassess your family's needs and educational growth on a regular basis as determined by your family.
**Digital Citizenship Specialist**

As our children head back to school I would encourage all of us to be the Very Important Person (VIP) in our children’s lives. To do that we should be Vigilant, Intentional and Present.

(1) Be Vigilant - Keeping tabs on our children’s online and offline activities feels like a full time job sometimes. But it is worth the extra effort to be vigilant.

(2) Be Intentional - Be intentional about the values you are teaching your children online and offline. If you want your children to be kind, for example, set the example of being kind in person and on your social media and other online activities. Monitor your children’s online activities and give them praise for the positive things they are doing online. Also chat with them about the things they might improve. For more ideas of positive activities your children can do online visit digcitutah.com. This is a wonderful digital resource for parents, teachers, and schools.

(3) Be present - Be present for your children. When you pick them up from school or when they walk in the door from school be ready to greet them and hear about their day. Try to quickly wrap up any phone calls or online activity so that you can really focus on your child as they arrive home and encourage them to not only share what they did that day, but how it made them feel. This lets them know you care and that they are important to you. Also be present for dinner time. Thirty years of prevention science shows that having family dinner helps build strong family bonds and helps prevent negative behaviors in your children’s lives. Put all devices away and focus on each other.

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**Military Family Specialist**

As Utah PTA’s Military Family Specialist, I provide opportunities, training and resources to raise awareness, build support, and help our military families and children meet the unique challenges they face! We have the opportunity to recognize military children and youth for their character, courage, sacrifice, resilience and service.

**Did you know?** In Utah we have over 18,000 children who have one or more parents, step-parents, siblings, or extended family members on full-time duty in the military, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty.

**What are the challenges our Military Children face?** They face frequent relocations, educational inconsistencies-different school systems, adjusting to new neighbors and communities, leaving friends and making new friends, family separations, grandparents as care givers, disability or loss of family member and many other challenges.

**What can PTA do?** Communicate with military families, educate the community, advocate -- to eliminate nation-wide educational inconsistencies, and be a source of information and support.

**How do we reach and include them?** Identify them, and find out who they are. Invite them, welcome them, and ask them to participate. Inform them of events and programs and communicate with them. Involve them, because volunteering is what they do. Include them, because no job is too small to use their skills.

**How does PTA benefit Military Children and Families?** PTA supports them by reaching out to them and helping them. PTA sustains them by being their friends and including them. PTA leaders and members recognize and honor their sacrifice and acknowledge their service with patriotic activities and programs.
**Family Engagement Specialist**

Enrollment is now open for the School of Excellence Program and consideration and esteemed designation. The deadline to enroll is Oct. 1. For more information about the program and to enroll, visit [https://www.pta.org/home/programs/National-PTA-School-of-Excellence](https://www.pta.org/home/programs/National-PTA-School-of-Excellence)

The National PTA School of Excellence is a recognition program that supports and celebrates partnerships between PTAs and schools to enrich the educational experience and overall well-being for all students. By enrolling in this program, your PTA and school administrators are making a year-long commitment in identifying and implementing an action plan for school improvement based on PTA's **National Standards for Family-School Partnerships** and **Transformative Family Engagement**.

PTAs and schools then work together to address areas for growth and create new ways for families to support student success. The National PTA School of Excellence designation is awarded when a PTA and school have achieved a high level of family-school partnerships.

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**Safety Commission**

The purpose of the Utah PTA Safety Commission is:

- To advocate for children and youth in order to provide a safe environment at home, at school and in the community.
- To involve parents, teachers, students and community in safety issues.
- To develop and implement programs that educate and inform to meet the needs of your community in safety issues.

During these last few months dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been concerns about the safety of our children and families.

One of these concerns is screen time. With all the increased time on digital media, Parents need to do the 3 M’s-Model, Monitor and Manage. Model a healthy digital lifestyle for your children by using technology appropriately. Manage personal information and accounts for young children. Monitor activity once children have started managing their own accounts. For more information see one of our community group’s website [https://respons-ability.net/](https://respons-ability.net/)

Another concern is the social and emotional well-being of our children. Another community group we work with is the Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition. They have a new campaign out this year called “Live On”. Check out their website [https://liveonutah.org/](https://liveonutah.org/).

Every parent and teen should have the SafeUT app on their phone it is available in the app store. They are starting a Digital Parent Roundtable. The first one is on August 20, 2020 from 6 to 7 pm. Email Marnie Saunders at marniesaunders@hsc.utah.edu to reserve your spot and get information about upcoming events.
Hello, and welcome to a new school year! I’m Todd Hougaard, the Student Leadership Commissioner. We have some exciting events taking place this year. Hopefully you’ve heard about, and are planning on coming to, our first ever Utah PTA Family Campout. It will be at the Willow Park Campground in Lehi, on Sept 4th & 5th. If you still want to come, please contact me to see if there is space available, todd@utahpta.org. More info can be found on our website, utahpta.org. It will be a great event for the whole family, or you can come as a student PTSA group as well.

PTSA Student Days at the Capitol will be Feb 9th, 16th & 18th, with the 16th being high school only. State Battle of the Bands is scheduled for April 24, 2021, at SLCC’s Grand Theatre. This year, the new Open MIKE competition will be a part of BOB in all of our regions. I look forward to a fun and eventful year.

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**Advocacy VP**

My name is LeAnn Wood and I am the Utah PTA Advocacy Vice President. I am part of an incredible programs and advocacy team comprised of commissioners and specialists. Our team can help connect your PTAs to the resources you need to be successful. Contact me at leann@utahpta.org and I can connect you with the right Board member to help your unit accomplish your goals.

I would like to invite you to be a part of the Legislative Advocacy Committee (LAC). This committee meets monthly during the school year and weekly during the Legislative Session. It is a recommending body to the Utah PTA Board of Directors regarding the positions Utah PTA takes on policies and legislation. Our first meeting is August 26, 2020 over Zoom. I'd like to see representation from across the State, so we can truly know the minds of our members as we recommend positions. Please send an email to me if you would like to participate with your name, Region/District, PTA school, and board position.

I'd also like to invite you to register for the Utah PTA Advocacy Conference on September 17, 2020. This year - due to a generous grant from Governor Herbert's Education Office, we are able to offer it for free to all PTA Members across the State. It will be a virtual conference through eventleaf.com. We will be holding our Fall Business Meeting where we will approve the 2020-2021 Legislative Priorities, Bylaw Amendments, and a new Health Resolution, "Mental/Emotional Health and Well-being”

We will also hear from Timothy Shriver, the son of Eunice Kennedy Shriver and Sargent Shriver. He is currently the chair of the Special Olympics International Board of Directors and also the chair of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the leading school reform organization in the field of social and emotional learning. Other great speakers will discuss education funding, prevention through technology, building connections in our families, and increasing diversity. You can register at https://www.utahpta.org/advocacy-conference-2020.

I look forward to hearing from you and increasing our representation in LAC and hope you will register for the Utah PTA Advocacy Conference.
“Building Bridges of Understanding”

with special keynote speaker

Timothy Shriver

Chair, Special Olympics International Board of Directors
Chair, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Thursday, September 17, 2020
9:00 a.m. - 2:15 p.m.

This is a virtual event for all PTA members throughout the state!

Cost:
• Free for all 2020-21 PTA members
  (Thanks to Governor Herbert’s office for providing a grant which allows us to make this event available.)
• $15 for Non-PTA members.

Register on our website

Schedule

9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Opening, Keynote, and Business Meeting

Building Bridges of Understanding through Social and Emotional Learning
Timothy Shriver, Chair, Special Olympics International Board of Directors and Chair, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Utah PTA Fall Business Meeting
• Approval of 2020-2021 Legislative Priorities
• Bylaw Amendments
• HEA 2020-1 Emotional/Mental Health and Well-Being Resolution

11:40 a.m. - 12:25 p.m. Session 1 (Choose 1)
• Using Technology to Engage Parents in Prevention
  Dr. Rick Hawk, CEO Upward Reach Foundation
  Marti Liccardo, Prevention and Health Educator

• Social/Emotional Learning Applications for Parents and PTA Leaders
  Kathleen Chronister, Director of Social Emotional Learning, Davis School District

12:35 p.m. – 1:20 p.m. Session 2: (Choose 1)
• Using Art to Build Bridges to At-Home Learning
  Lisa Cluff, Executive Director, Art Works for Kids

• Show Me the Money—Public Education Funding
  Steve Hirase, Utah PTA Education Commissioner

1:30 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. Session 3: (Choose 1)
• Embracing Diversity
  Denise Lake, Ethnicity Minority Representative, UEA
  Olivia Jaramillo, Utah PTA Diversity and Inclusivity Board Specialist

• Connection—Using the Social Development Strategy
  Rob Timmerman, DSAMH Salt Lake Region Prevention Director
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!