

PTA: POWER UP

POWER UP PARTNERSHIP

POWER UP ADVOCACY

POWER UP ENGAGEMENT

POWER UP THE VALUE

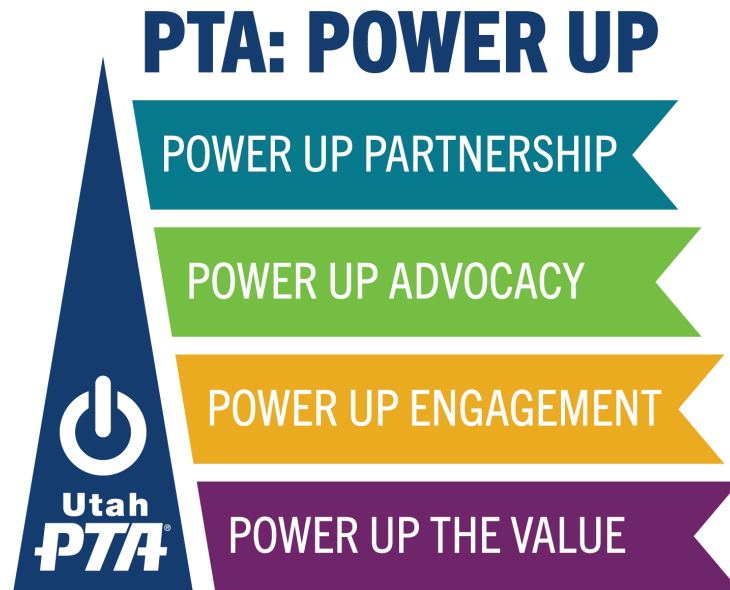


Utah
PTA®

**2026-2027 Utah PTA
Membership Toolkit**

PTA: Power Up

2026-2027 Utah PTA Membership Toolkit



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A NOTE ON CREATION & TRANSPARENCY

This toolkit was conceptualized, researched, and directed by the Utah PTA Membership Committee, drawing directly from live feedback gathered at the 2026 Utah PTA State Leadership Convention and foundational research on social capital. Generative AI tools (Gemini) were utilized as a collaborative drafting and organizational partner to synthesize data, structure frameworks, and refine text. All strategies, guidance, and final content were independently reviewed, edited, and approved for alignment with Utah PTA bylaws and mission standards.

PTA: Power Up.....	2
2026-2027 Utah PTA Membership Toolkit.....	2
Introduction: Welcome to the Power Up Year.....	5
What to Expect from This Toolkit.....	5
The Local Grid Diagnostic Check.....	5
Why Membership Matters – Voices from the Field.....	7
How to Use This Data for Your PTA.....	8
Pillar 1: Power Up VALUE (The Foundation).....	9
Your 30-Second Value Statement Template:.....	9
Programs and Events:.....	9
The National PTA Framework: Involvement vs. Engagement.....	10
Pillar 2: Power Up ENGAGEMENT (The Adult Connection).....	12
The Inclusion Upgrade: Moving From Good Interaction to Real Engagement.....	13
Engaging Father Figures and Men.....	13
Programs and Events:.....	13
Pillar 3: Power Up ADVOCACY (Shared Power).....	15
Programs and Events:.....	16
Pillar 4: Power Up PARTNERSHIPS (The Apex).....	18
Programs and Events:.....	19
Reclaiming the Registration Gap: Navigating Non-Commingle Rules.....	20
1. Secure the Digital Hand-Off (Online & Marquee).....	20
2. Execute a QR Code Blitz (Back-to-School & Event Sponsoring).....	20
3. Mobilize Frontline Ambassadors (Faculty & Students).....	21
Power Up Your PTSA.....	21
Student-Led Value (Power Up Value).....	21
Peer-to-Peer Recruitment (Power Up Engagement).....	21
Elevating Youth Voices (Power Up Advocacy).....	21
High School Parent Connection (Power Up Partnerships).....	21
Utah PTA Membership Awards & Recognition.....	22
Monthly Incentive Awards (No Application Required).....	22
Strategic Application Required Awards (Due March 1st unless otherwise noted).....	22
THE POWER GRID COMMUNICATIONS PLAYBOOK.....	24
1. Public Relations Basics: Appointing Your Storyteller.....	24
Building Your Local Media Grid.....	24
2. Media Interview Training: Staying Grounded & On-Message.....	24
The "Hot Mic" Rule.....	24
The "Bridging" Technique.....	25
The Energy Trick.....	25
3. Civic Advocacy: The "Power Up PTA" Proclamation Template.....	25

SAMPLE CITY PROCLAMATION.....	25
4. Expanding Our Footprint: Community Asset Mapping.....	26
Region & Council Guidance – System Administrators of the Power Grid.....	26
1. Modeling: Practicing "Unreasonable Hospitality" at the Leadership Level.....	26
2. Shielding: Lowering Friction and Protecting Local Focus.....	26
3. Mapping: Identifying and Plugging "Dead Zones".....	27
The Region & Council Core Vision.....	27
Selected Bibliography and Resources.....	28

Introduction: Welcome to the Power Up Year

Welcome to the 2026–2027 Utah PTA Membership Toolkit! Whether you are an experienced Membership VP, a local Executive Committee managing recruitment on top of your executive duties, or just someone who has a passion for community building, this toolkit is designed to be your logical, step-by-step roadmap for the school year.

This year, we are moving beyond "compliance" to "connection." While 10 members make a PTA official, it is the depth of our membership that creates the Social Capital necessary to transform our schools.

What to Expect from This Toolkit

This is not just a collection of marketing ideas or a checklist for compliance. This toolkit is a comprehensive framework built to help your PTA combat the modern "Crisis of Connection" and systematically build Social Capital in your neighborhood while also growing your membership.

The material is organized around the **four distinct pillars of our Power Up Pyramid**:

- **Value:** Showing parents the inherent worth of a seat at the table.
- **Engagement:** Moving past transactions to connect the adults in our community.
- **Advocacy:** Sharing power and giving our school communities a legitimate voice.
- **Partnerships:** Teaming up with administrators to tackle our schools' unique challenges.

Within each pillar, you will find simple, data-driven, and actionable tools designed to fit into your busy schedule, without causing leadership burnout, to help you turn these strategies into direct local action.

Celebrating Your Success: Utah PTA Membership Awards

Building community takes intentional effort, and Utah PTA wants to recognize and celebrate your PTA's hard work. Throughout the year, your growth, representative advocacy, and engagement efforts will qualify your PTA for various state-level membership awards.

As you plan your membership calendar, keep these awards in mind as milestones for your team. You can find the full application details, criteria, and deadlines for our standard state awards integrated within this toolkit and at utahpta.org/membership-awards.

Get ready to charge your grid, connect your community, and Power Up your PTA!

The Local Grid Diagnostic Check

How to use this tool: Put these 7 Power Switches in front of your board during your first summer meeting or mid-year alignment. Use this quick audit to see which switches are flipped and where your community grid needs power.

Look at your current calendar and ask: "Which switches are we actively flipping, and where is our community grid completely dark?" Use the quick diagnostics and action tools below to

transform your standard calendar into a high-yield community network:

1. The Youth Switch (Education)

- a. **The Diagnostic:** Is your PTA viewed strictly as an "adults-only" organization, or are students actively integrated into the community energy?
- b. **The Action Tool:** For secondary schools, appoint a student representative to your board or create a student-led committee. For elementary schools, feature student artwork, leadership roles (like morning announcers or flag monitors), and youth-focused safety initiatives to make kids active participants in the PTA culture. For more information on engaging youth, go read the Power Up Your PTSA section later in this Toolkit.
- c. **The Upgrade:** Turn student recognition into a community event. Instead of just handing out Reflections ribbons or safety badges in class, invite the winning students to showcase their work or lead a pledge at a general meeting. When parents see their children spotlighted and respected as leaders by the PTA, their loyalty to your organization skyrockets.

2. The Workplace Switch (Volunteer Culture)

- a. **The Diagnostic:** Do volunteers leave your interactions feeling drained by administrative dread, or energized by a professional, organized network?
- b. **The Action Tool:** Consider implementing 'bitesize micro-volunteering' job descriptions and respecting their boundaries like a professional employer would. Instead of asking for a vague, intimidating time commitment, ask for a "30-minute Friday morning folder-stuffer."
- c. **The Upgrade:** When onboarding a new volunteer, don't just hand them a task. Take 10 minutes to ask a question like, "What is a skill you love using that you'd like to bring to our school?" Treat your volunteers like VIPs; aligning their tasks with their strengths ensures they feel uniquely seen, not just used.

3. The Spatial Switch (The School Hub)

- a. **The Diagnostic:** Are your parents just dropping kids off in the parking loop, or are they stepping across the physical threshold of the school to connect?
- b. **The Action Tool:** Host a morning welcome station or a casual evening "Chalk the Walk" event outside the school doors. Move your PTA table out of the dark hallway and right into the high-traffic common areas during school events.
- c. **The Upgrade:** When staffing your PTA table, strive to move beyond being a passive flyer-hander. Aim to look parents in the eye, welcome them warmly, and practice "loud listening" when they speak. True community isn't built by logos; it is built when an overwhelmed parent walks into a school event and feels instantly recognized and valued.

4. The Bridging Switch (Inclusivity)

- a. **The Diagnostic:** Does your membership roster reflect the actual demographic makeup of your school boundary, or are you stuck in an echo chamber?
- b. **The Action Tool:** Actively reach out to neighborhood leaders, localized community organizations, or local business owners outside your usual circle. Invite them to partner on a school-support project to build a broader, stronger coalition for your campus.
- c. **The Upgrade:** Practice "Language and Location Audits." Look closely at where you are holding meetings and what language you use. Upgrade by translating your core welcome materials into the primary languages spoken in your school

boundary, and host a casual "pop-up PTA drink stop" at a local park or apartment complex common room to meet families exactly where they are.

5. The Cultural Switch (Creative Community)

- a. **The Diagnostic:** Are your family activities purely consumer-based (like a restaurant spirit night), or are they participatory and creative?
- b. **The Action Tool:** Use the Reflections program as a community launchpad, not just a contest. Host a school-wide showcase night where every entry is celebrated, or coordinate a community cultural night celebrating the unique backgrounds and talents of your student body.
- c. **The Upgrade:** Consider pivoting from "Gatekeepers" to "Co-Creators." Rather than planning a cultural or arts night in a vacuum, your board can actively invite a diverse group of non-PTA parents to design the evening with you. When families help build the experience, they naturally invite their entire social networks to attend.

6. The Digital Switch (Tech for Connection)

- a. **The Diagnostic:** Are your digital pages just a static bulletin board of announcements, or are they actively pulling people into real-life connection?
- b. **The Action Tool:** Follow the 80/20 Rule on your website and social media. 80% of your content should feature community connection, student success, and faces of real parents; only 20% should be transactional flyers or "buy a membership" links. Use the digital grid to drive physical community.
- c. **The Upgrade:** Humanize your data. Instead of posting generic graphics or walls of text on Givebacks, use your platform to tell micro-stories. Post a quick 30-second video of a teacher saying thank you for a PTA grant, or a photo of a parent volunteer smiling at an event with a quote about why they love this school. People don't join organizations; they join people.

7. The Civic Switch (Grassroots Advocacy)

- a. **The Diagnostic:** Do your members know why their membership voice matters, or do they think the PTA is just a fundraising group for school supplies?
- b. **The Action Tool:** Dedicate five minutes of your meetings or newsletters to a "Local Advocacy Update." Give your members a quick look at a localized issue (like a district policy shift or a state education resource) and show them exactly how their unified PTA voice gives them a seat at the decision-making table.
- c. **The Upgrade:** Demystify the process with a "One-Click Action." When a critical school board issue or state education bill arises, don't just tell parents to "be advocates." Give them an updated list of the issues and a direct link to find their representative in under 60 seconds. When you make advocacy bitesize and frictionless, you build a highly responsive, powerful civic network.

Why Membership Matters – Voices from the Field

During the 2026 Utah PTA State Leadership Convention, we asked local leaders across the state one simple question: **"Why do you feel membership is important for your PTA?"** Out of 50 real-time responses, the feedback naturally clustered into three distinct categories. These voices prove that our local units are actively moving away from treating parents like "clients to serve" and are looking to build true "partnerships to gain."

Theme 1: The Collective Voice (Advocacy & Representation)

Our leaders recognize that a single member represents democratic weight. Membership isn't a checklist; it's a microphone.

- "Being involved gives us a voice to create a positive, supportive environment for all children."
- "It gives more voices to advocate for what's best for the group... numbers help state advocacy."
- "To provide education which can help lead to advocacy—see the pain points for students/families."
- "So people have a voice."

Theme 2: Breaking the Isolation (Unity & Social Capital)

PTA leaders feel the modern 'Crisis of Connection' and see membership as the primary tool to repair the community fabric.

- "A strong PTA membership strengthens connections between families, school, and community."
- "To help parents feel connected to the school... because I never know what's going on."
- "Diversity in the PTA creates a more comfortable school for everyone... to bring diversity and inclusion within our PTA."
- "To improve community and unity."

Theme 3: The Mindset Shift (From Volunteers to Partners)

This is the core of the Power Up campaign. True engagement means recognizing that every member lightens the emotional load, even if they never set foot on campus to volunteer.

- "Membership helps us see which parents we can turn into partners. We reach out personally."
- "More members means a lighter load for everyone, as well as more creative ideas!"
- "So no one person gets burnt out... because one person can't do it alone."

How to Use This Data for Your PTA

If your PTA is struggling to articulate why parents should pay dues if they don't have time to volunteer, use these baseline truths compiled directly from Utah PTA leaders:

- You buy a voice, not a job: numbers drive advocacy weight at the legislative session. Your membership counts mathematically, even if your calendar is full.
- You fund the bridge, not just the party: Joining the PTA connects you to the adult network surrounding your child. It is the fastest way to stay informed and ensure no family feels isolated.
- You transition from 'Client' to 'Partner': When you join, you shift the school culture from Involvement (doing tasks) to Engagement (sharing the vision).

Pillar 1: Power Up VALUE (The Foundation)

Before we can ask parents to engage, we must prove the inherent worth of belonging. A membership buys a voice, not just a program. Start with connecting, not fundraising.

- **The Power Drain:** Many parents assume joining the PTA is a transactional trap—that it means paying money just to be pressured into a volunteer shift they don't have capacity for. This triggers the modern instinct to "protect one's peace," and isolation sets in.
- **The Logic (Compliance vs. Culture):** To stay compliant, a local PTA only needs 10 members. However, 10 people cannot accurately represent a school of 600+ students. Shifting from a compliance mindset to a cultural mindset means seeing membership growth as critical, representative advocacy.
- **The "I" to "We" Shift:** Drawing from Robert Putnam's research in *The Upswing*, our recruitment messaging must shift from individual convenience ("What the PTA can do for your specific child") to collective strength ("What we are doing together for our school community"). Your individual membership is the human capital that builds our collective social capital. Shift the narrative from a transaction (paying money for a card) to a connection (gaining a seat at the table).
- **Actionable Tools for Your PTA:**
 - **The "Welcome to the Table" Messaging:** Explicitly state on your flyers and social media: "Your dues buy you a voice in our school's advocacy. Volunteering is always optional; your supportive membership is what matters."
 - **The Value Audit:** Review your first fall membership push. Is the messaging focused on what the PTA needs from parents (time/money), or what the PTA provides for parents (community, info, representation)?
 - **The Power of the One hook:** Remind parents that their individual membership is the "Human Capital" that powers our collective "Social Capital" at the District and State level.

Your 30-Second Value Statement Template:

"Our PTA focuses on helping families find their tribe and support our students. By joining for \$X, you aren't signing up to volunteer—you are securing a vote on how our funds are spent and adding your voice to the largest child advocacy group in Utah. How can our PTA best support your family this year?"

Use the Value Statement above or create your own to share with family, friends, and your community!

Programs and Events:

Back-to-School Night:

- **The Logic:** Back-to-School Night is the highest-traffic event of the year, making it the most critical window to disrupt isolation before school routines set in. Speaking directly alongside the administration signals that the PTA is an essential, integrated partner in the school ecosystem rather than an optional, transactional club.
- **The Action & Impact:** Partner with the school administration to secure a brief PTA

speaking window immediately following the Principal's address, and distribute a clean, highly accessible flyer outlining the evening's schedule. Providing this clear roadmap lowers the cognitive barrier to entry, transforms anxious or passive spectators into active partners, and immediately establishes the PTA as a welcoming, transparent gateway to the school community.

Thanksgiving / Season of Gratitude

- **The Logic:** True social capital relies on mutual trust and public appreciation. Utilizing the season of gratitude to highlight the diverse contributions of all families reinforces the message that every member has a valued seat at the table.
- **The Action & Impact:** Create a physical or digital "Gratitude Wall" or Roll Call where parents, students, and staff can publicly post what they appreciate about their school community. By focusing your messaging on collective strength ("*We are thankful for the 400+ voices that make our PTA a community*"), you shift the cultural mindset from individual isolation to collective pride, naturally boosting long-term member retention.

National Volunteer Week (Third Week of April)

- **The Logic:** To combat the "protection of peace" culture, we must celebrate contributions at all levels. Highlighting volunteers proves that the PTA values the human capital parents invest, making the organization attractive to outsiders.
- **The Action & Impact:** The "Low-Friction" Volunteer Roll Call. Don't just celebrate the board members who log 100 hours. Use this week to publicly thank the parents who did "one small thing"—the dad who set up chairs for 15 minutes, or the mom who sent in a box of tissues. By lowering the perceived barrier to entry, you show that the PTA is an inclusive "We" rather than an exclusive "I" club. This transparency naturally attracts fence-sitters to join.

The National PTA Framework: Involvement vs. Engagement

To truly power up our school communities, local units must understand the functional difference between merely involving parents and truly engaging families. National PTA President Yvonne Johnson highlights this critical shift in approach:

"An involved parent takes part in the activities already determined by the school. An engaged parent takes a step further, often becoming part of the school's decision-making process." — Annie E. Casey Foundation

When a local PTA operates under the traditional "Involvement" model, it accidentally limits its own power grid. True "Family Engagement" is what generates lasting social capital.

Parental Involvement (Traditional Model)	Family Engagement (Power Up Model)
Leads with its mouth: The school/PTA determines the projects, needs, and goals first, then tells parents how they can contribute.	Leads with its ears: The school/PTA listens to parents to find out what they think, dream, and worry about.

Identifies Tasks: Focuses on filling volunteer slots and checking off compliance boxes.	Shares Power: Invites parents into the decision-making process to solve real challenges together.
Goal is to serve clients: Treats families as passive consumers of school programs.	Goal is to gain partners: Treats families as active, valued co-creators of the school community.

Actionable Step for Local PTAs: Look at your board's upcoming agenda. Are you planning meetings to tell parents what tasks you need them to do, or are you creating spaces to listen to what they care about? Shift your upcoming interactions from a lecture into a conversation.

Pillar 2: Power Up ENGAGEMENT (The Adult Connection)

"Children do better when the adults around them are connected to each other, not just to the child." — Eric Woodhouse. This pillar focuses on breaking through post-pandemic digital isolation and building genuine trust.

- **The Power Drain:** The privatization of leisure (social media, individual streaming devices) and the systemic social shifts from COVID-19 have made digital interaction the default. In-person connection now feels like a higher "cost" to busy families.
- **The Logic:** True social capital requires personal communication. Collecting a name and dues is not enough; we must convert individual human capital into collective social capital.
- **The Solution (The "Small-Circle" Strategy):** In *Better Together*, Putnam notes that large organizations can feel anonymous and intimidating. The prescription is to build your larger PTA through smaller, intimate "sub-circles" where face-to-face trust can actually grow. Feeling a sense of belonging within the school community combats the modern loneliness epidemic.
- **Actionable Tools for Your PTA:**
 - **The "After the Join" 48-Hour Checklist:** Collecting a name and dues is just a transaction. It's often said that a person joins the PTA and then never hears anything from them. Building social capital requires a personal touch. Follow these steps for every new member:
 - **The Personal Recognition:** Send a direct text or email (no mass blasts) thanking them personally for joining.
 - **The Human Capital Inquiry:** Ask one simple question: "What is one thing you are passionate about regarding our school this year?"
 - **The Connection:** Ensure they have a direct link to your PTA's primary communication channel (Email, GroupMe, Givebacks, newsletter, etc.).
 - **Low-Friction Adult Events:** Organize grade-level cohorts, "Neighborhood Clusters," or casual park playdates before school starts. Keep the explicit goal focused on getting parents talking to each other, rather than sitting through a presentation. People are more likely to join and stay when they have a face-to-face bond with 5–10 other adults.
 - **Personal Invitations:** Mass emails rarely build community. Encourage your board to extend tailored, personal invitations to younger parents or non-traditional caregivers looking to find their tribe. Ask them what they care about first, then connect them to a matching lane.
 - **The "Hot Dog Hello" Kickoff:** Instead of starting the year with a formal meeting, launch with a low-friction, whole-community social event (like a backyard BBQ or potluck). Use this strictly to build community connections—have a high-visibility membership table nearby, but let the primary focus be hospitality.
 - **"Sponsored by PTA" Visibility:** Buy or create yard signs, banners, and stickers that state clearly: "Sponsored by *School Name* PTA." Place these at school field days, assemblies, teacher luncheons, and community events. If the PTA's value is invisible, our membership will be too.

The Inclusion Upgrade: Moving From Good Interaction to Real Engagement

True family engagement means meeting families exactly where they are, not where we want them to be. Local boards can build inclusion directly into their operational routines by starting with one or two simple, high-impact habits:

- **The Calendar Audit:** Consider consulting a multi-cultural calendar during your executive planning sessions to intentionally avoid scheduling major PTA events on significant neighborhood cultural or religious milestones.
- **Flexible Scheduling:** Consider rotating your meeting times throughout the school year to ensure parents working non-traditional or varied shifts have an equal opportunity to participate.
- **Active Conversation over Lectures:** Evaluate your physical meeting layouts. Utilizing small-group seating arrangements rather than rows of forward-facing chairs helps the PTA talk with families rather than speaking at them.

Engaging Father Figures and Men

An excellent strategy for deepening your adult network is creating intentional, targeted outreach for dads, grandfathers, and male mentors, who are frequently underrepresented on local boards.

- **Focus on Purpose Over Parties:** Boards are encouraged to avoid anchoring connection opportunities exclusively around parties or carnivals, which can inadvertently alienate parents looking for deeper educational or family milestones. Instead, invite them to connect around topics that directly impact their students' daily lives, such as stress management, peer connection, and navigating school transitions.
- **Respect Diverse Schedules:** PTAs can respect diverse schedules by providing purposeful, non-traditional volunteer opportunities that respect varied work shifts (such as coordinating a morning safety walk or a weekend campus initiative).
- **Recognize Them Individually:** When father figures are welcomed individually, recognized by name, and given a clear purpose, they become incredibly impactful role models for the entire student body. This consistent outreach also naturally positions your PTA to qualify for the state-level MARS (Men Are Really Super) Award.

Programs and Events:

National Custodian Day (October 2)

- **The Logic:** Social capital requires seeing and valuing every member of the school ecosystem. Cultivating a culture where families actively connect with school staff who usually work behind the scenes models a true community connection for our students.
- **The Action & Impact:** Coordinate a morning drink or treat station where parents drop off items and stay for 10 minutes to personally chat with and thank the custodial crew, pairing it with specific "Thank You" notes written by parents and students. This

intentionally closes the social distance between the parent body and the operational staff, building Bridging Social Capital and fostering a unified school climate.

Halloween/Autumn Festivals

- **The Logic:** Major community holidays are natural opportunities to break through post-pandemic isolation. By hosting low-friction, high-visibility community events, the PTA provides a safe, welcoming space for families to connect face-to-face.
- **The Action & Impact:** Structure your Trunk-or-Treat or Autumn Festival layout to encourage adult conversation rather than just a fast line for candy. Set up a "PTA Connection Station" with warm cider or cocoa where parents can mingle and talk to board members in a relaxed, festive environment, creating an immediate sense of geographic and social belonging that converts an individual family activity into a shared community celebration.

Pillar 3: Power Up ADVOCACY (Shared Power)

Advocacy is moving from "taking tasks" to "sharing power." Higher membership ensures our voice carries legitimate weight.

- **The Power Drain:** A systemic, decades-long decline in trust toward large organizations and institutions makes parents hesitant to "join" things. Furthermore, if a PTA board only interacts with a small, familiar group of parents, it accidentally builds Bonding Social Capital (exclusivity) instead of Bridging Social Capital (inclusivity), alienating the broader school community.
- **The Logic:** When parents feel they have actual influence over the school environment, their commitment skyrockets. These data-driven proof points explain why membership numbers matter to your community and stakeholders:
 - **The Academic Link:** Research consistently shows that students in schools with high social capital (deeply connected parent networks) achieve significantly higher test scores, regardless of socio-economic background.
 - **The Representation Weight:** When addressing a school board, principal, or local government, saying "I represent 400 families" carries unmatched institutional legitimacy compared to "I represent a committee of 10."
 - **The Health Metric:** Social isolation is statistically as dangerous to physical health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (U.S. Surgeon General).
 - **The Retention Logic:** Families who feel a sense of "belonging" in the first 30 days are 40% more likely to renew their membership the following year.
- **The Solution (Bridging Social Capital):** In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam emphasizes that for a community to thrive, it must actively build bridges across diverse demographics. A "Power Up" PTA acts as a microphone for the entire neighborhood, ensuring the PTA's advocacy reflects every family, not just a select few. Position your PTA as a primary bridge for community feedback and representative advocacy.
- **Actionable Tools for Local PTAs:**
 - **The "What Do You Think?" Pulse Poll:** Share power by asking new members for their perspective. Send a simple, 1-question digital poll on a relevant campus topic (e.g., "What safety topics do you want addressed at our next community night?" or "What are your thoughts on the new drop-off traffic flow?").
 - **The Voice Recruitment Script:** Update your sign-up messaging to say: "Your membership is your vote. Every single person who joins adds valuable weight to our voice when we advocate for student safety, funding, and resources at the district and state level."
 - **Share Visible Bill Lists:** Provide a simplified, parent-friendly list of the top education, safety, family life, community engagement, and health bills Utah PTA is tracking during the legislative session. Find the list here: <https://www.utahpta.org/bills>.
 - **Share Talking Points and Graphics:** Give members monthly, bite-sized social media posts or newsletter blurbs that highlight a single advocacy win (e.g., "Did you know Utah PTA advocated for [Bill X] to protect student safety? Your membership dues directly fund this legislative voice.").
 - **Tools to Increase Accessibility:** Consider utilizing simple, free digital tools to

keep communication lines accessible, including closed captioning during presentations or multi-lingual translated slides to ensure every family's voice is represented.

Programs and Events:

Utah PTA Advocacy Conference (Fall 2026)

- **The Logic:** Local presidents, advocacy VPs, and other PTA members attend this conference to get the latest data-driven insights on current issues facing Utah students.
- **The Action & Impact:** Take the data and resources learned at this conference back to your community to send a "What Do You Think?" Pulse Polls and build your own advocacy program. It gives your PTA the data-driven knowledge to speak confidently when communicating school issues to local parents. It also gives the community a chance to share their opinion and voices.

PTA/PTSA Days at the Capitol (January 2027)

- **The Logic:** Utah PTA hosts this event to share how to connect with legislators and an opportunity to connect with each PTA's representatives.
- **The Action & Impact:** Bring your local board members, parents, and student PTSA representatives to the Utah State Capitol to interact directly with lawmakers during the legislative session. Use this event to invite your representatives to join your PTA and qualify your PTA for the A Voice for Every Child Challenge. This event is the live deployment of your built-up social capital. When your PTA participates, it proves to school board members and district leadership that the PTA is a powerful, organized partner capable of moving the needle on statewide education initiatives.

National PTA Founders' Day (February 17)

- **The Logic:** Founders' Day celebrates the legacy of Alice McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst, who founded the organization in 1897 to give a legitimate voice to the needs of children. Celebrating this history reminds parents that their local membership isn't just a pass for school parties—it's part of a massive, historic legislative microphone.
- **The Action & Impact:** The "Legacy of a Voice" Campaign. Use this day to push a mid-winter membership drive. Share a simple graphic or text outlining the historic legislative wins of the PTA (like the creation of kindergarten, child labor laws, and school lunch programs). It combats the "Trust Gap" by grounding the local PTA in an established, trustworthy institution, inspiring parents to join the collective "We" to protect children's resources.

President's Day (Third Monday in February)

- **The Logic:** Civic education and understanding how shared power works are core elements of Putnam's prescription for civic innovation. President's Day can move past a simple day off from school to a celebration of local civic leadership.
- **The Action & Impact:** The "Future Leaders" Student Showcase. Have a teacher nominate some students, or if you are a PTSA, your student board members, lead a campaign highlighting how youth can engage in local government, or invite a local mayor or city council member to do a brief, student-led Q&A. It models Meaningful Youth Civic Innovation and bridges the social gap between local youth, families, and city leadership.

National Teacher Appreciation Week (First Full Week of May)

- **The Logic:** Teachers are the frontline advocates for our children. True advocacy means using the PTA's collective voice to lift the burden off educators, creating a space of shared power where parents and teachers act as a single unit.
- **The Action & Impact:** The "Supply Bucket" or "Duty Coverage" Push. In alignment with your school administration, organize parent shifts to cover recess or lunch duty during this week so teachers get a true, uninterrupted break. Alternatively, run a targeted drive to restock their classroom emergency supplies. It creates immense goodwill and structural trust. When teachers see parents actively using their collective organization to solve real-world workplace strains, they are 100% more likely to join the PTA, leading to the Super Teachers & Staff Award and a unified advocacy voice.

Pillar 4: Power Up PARTNERSHIPS (The Apex)

Partnerships exist primarily between families, the PTA, and the school/district administration. This is the apex of the pyramid where our collective social capital is deployed to solve impactful, real-world challenges.

- **The Power Drain:** The relational line between families and schools has suffered, leaving PTAs to navigate two major obstacles: active friction and passive disconnect. Active friction stems from broader systemic debates and personal frustrations—like unresolved safety or special education needs—that cause parents to view school leadership with defensive skepticism. Meanwhile, a much larger passive disconnect leaves families simply unengaged because they don't know how or where to connect. Left unaddressed, this trust gap risks reducing the PTA to a low-level booster club rather than a powerful partner in decisions impacting student well-being and school climate.
- **The Logic:** True partnerships are built on mutual value. To build deep trust with school administrators, we must frame the PTA not as a separate club that asks for favors or handles low-level chores, but as a strategic asset that helps them achieve their school-wide goals.
- **The Solution:** Deploy your built-up social capital to tackle your community's unique needs and act as a neutral, trusted bridge. We move past historic isolation by creating transparent, structured frameworks for parent-administration collaboration, transforming the school culture from defensive boundaries into shared power.
- **The Blueprint (The North Platte Canteen):** During World War II, a small town in Nebraska organized a massive, zero-government-funding collaborative effort that pooled the rations of 125 different communities to feed over 6 million transit soldiers. It is the ultimate historical example of transforming individual Human Capital into a powerhouse of Social Capital through a structured organization. It moves us from diagnosing the "collapse" of community to proving the "possibility" of community.
 - "What will be your 'North Platte'?" — Eric Woodhouse
- **Actionable Tools for Local PTAs:**
 - **The "North Platte" Challenge:** Local Executive Committees are encouraged to schedule an alignment meeting with their Principal and ask one specific, data-driven question: "What is the single biggest operational or community challenge our school is facing this year that the PTA can help solve by deploying our network of connected parents?"
 - **The Principal & School Board Alignment Script:** Use this exact framework to pitch your membership efforts to administrators as a direct win for their administration: "By intentionally growing our membership and connecting the adults in this community, we are building a foundation of trust and a network of connected, supportive adults that will make implementing school-wide academic and safety goals smoother, more collaborative, and more successful for everyone."
 - **Strategic Advocacy-Building Partnerships with District & Board:** Partnerships are built on mutual value. When meeting with administrators, explicitly frame the PTA as a Social Capital Generator:
 - **For the Family Resource Liaison:** Consider establishing an active partnership with your school's family resource liaison or social worker.

They are a phenomenal asset for identifying systemic barriers to family engagement, helping the board understand past trust fractures, and discovering creative ways to support families who cannot be traditionally involved on campus.

- **For Principals:** Position the PTA as the "Relational Home Visit" partner. We build the baseline community trust that allows the school to implement its academic goals with minimal friction.
- **For the School Board:** Position the PTA as the primary, organized bridge for two-way community feedback. A high-membership, representative PTA provides a true cross-section of family needs, drastically reducing misunderstandings and public friction during district-wide changes.

Programs and Events:

Earth Day (April 22)

- **The Logic:** Real-world, visible service initiatives are the ultimate display of social capital in action. It moves communities from talking about connection to physically working side-by-side to solve a shared, localized goal.
- **The Action & Impact:** The Campus Beautification Partnership. Partner with your school principal, custodians, and local community businesses to host a Saturday morning campus cleanup, garden planting, or outdoor safety-mapping project. Working shoulder-to-shoulder builds deep interpersonal trust between parents, staff, and administration. It acts as a mini "North Platte" challenge where a tangible, visible problem is solved via collective human capital.

National School Admin Day/Principal Appreciation (May 1)

- **The Logic:** Trust with administration is the apex of the pyramid. Acknowledging the intense pressure school leaders face, especially regarding safety and capacity, positions the PTA as a supportive ally rather than a demanding special-interest group.
- **The Action & Impact:** The "We've Got Your Back" Campaign. Use this day to deliver an appreciation basket, but include a specific note that reinforces your alignment script: "Thank you for your leadership. Our goal this year is to keep building the connected community network that supports your academic vision for this school." It directly strengthens the institutional bond between the PTA executive team and school leadership, paving the way for smooth collaboration on future projects.

Utah PTA Leadership Convention (May 2027)

- **The Logic:** As the capstone event of the year, the annual Utah PTA Leadership Convention gathers incoming and continuing leaders for intensive training, networking, valuable vendor resources, and a celebration of state awards and recognition.
- **The Action & Impact:** Attend this event to build vital new partnerships with vendors, fellow PTA leaders, and your District Superintendent. This event serves as the ultimate collaborative hub where local PTAs expand their networks beyond their own school walls. By interfacing directly with district administrators, leaders from other PTAs, and resource vendors, leaders build the institutional trust and external partnerships necessary to bring high-level resources back to their local campuses. Simultaneously, celebrating state awards honors the collective effort of the school community, preventing

leadership burnout and ensuring a smooth, trusted transition of power for the next grid cycle.

Reclaiming the Registration Gap: Navigating Non-Commingling Rules

A few years ago, school districts updated policy guidelines to separate school fees from PTA funds, removing the default "Join PTA" checkbox from online school registration. While legally necessary to prevent the commingling of public and non-profit funds, it left many secondary PTSAs feeling digitally disconnected from incoming families.

We do not need to be on the fee schedule to be on the parents' radar. Consider using these three frictionless strategies to reclaim your visibility during registration and back-to-school windows:

1. Secure the Digital Hand-Off (Online & Marquee)

While the school cannot physically collect your dues through their payment portal, they can easily point parents to yours.

- **Registration Link:** Work with school administration and district IT early in the summer to request a direct, external link to your Givebacks portal on the final confirmation page of online school registration.
- **The Script:** *"Please include a line that says: 'Support your student by joining the PTSA! Click here to purchase your membership via our secure Givebacks portal.'"*
- **Communication Blasts:** Coordinate with the front office to run a bite-sized message on the school's electronic marquee and school applications during the first three weeks of school: *"School registration is done, but your community connection isn't! Click here to join the PTSA."*

2. Execute a QR Code Blitz (Back-to-School & Event Sponsoring)

Secondary parents and students move fast; your join options must be entirely digital and frictionless.

- **Frictionless Join:** Your PTA may want to transition away from paper forms and cash boxes by generating a high-visibility QR code linking directly to your online storefront. Tape these to the walls where parents line up for schedule pick-up, print them on school maps, and display them prominently on table signs.
- **Visible Sponsorship:** It is highly effective to put a literal stamp of ownership on everything you do. If you provide student planners, print your Givebacks QR code on the back cover. If you sponsor a hydration station at Club Rush or dances, hang a large banner: *"Thirst quenched by your local PTSA. Scan here to join us and keep these events powered up!"*

3. Mobilize Frontline Ambassadors (Faculty & Students)

Teachers and student leaders are the ultimate frontline promoters for your PTSA. If they buy in, families follow.

- **The Faculty Pitch:** Host a brief "Power Up Pitch" during the opening faculty meeting. Remind teachers that PTSA mini-grants are tied directly to representative advocacy.
- **The Incentive:** Offer a simple community-building incentive: the first department to reach 100% staff membership gets lunch or a premium soda bar provided by the PTSA.

Power Up Your PTSA

Student-Led Value (Power Up Value)

Creating a Student Advisory Board or PTSA Youth Committee:

The Strategy: High school students are looking for meaningful leadership hours, resume builders, and passion projects. Instead of asking them to just pay dues, grant students voting seats or project budgets. When students realize they can use the PTSA's non-profit framework to launch their own mental health awareness weeks, peer-support groups, or campus events, the membership follows the ownership.

Peer-to-Peer Recruitment (Power Up Engagement)

"Students Recruiting Students" campaign blueprints:

The Strategy: Parents cannot recruit high schoolers; only students can recruit students. Provide student leaders social media graphics, club rush booth ideas, and student-centric messaging that focuses on stress management, connection, and breaking stigmas, topics Gen Z actually cares about.

Elevating Youth Voices (Power Up Advocacy)

Show students their voice matters:

The Strategy: High school students are deeply motivated by community impact and authentic representation. While transactional draws like food or social events can bring students to their first meeting, what keeps them engaged is being treated as thoughtful contributors with ideas worth developing. Focus on giving student boards visible responsibility and highlighting the direct impact of their choices on campus climate.

High School Parent Connection (Power Up Partnerships)

Transitioning to High School parent forums:

The Strategy: Parents pull back in high school because their kids want independence, but parents still need a community to navigate things like teen mental health, college prep, and social pressures. Local PTAs can host collaborative forums, partnering with school counselors and student panels. When parents see the PTSA as their pipeline to understanding their teen's world, the membership becomes indispensable.

Utah PTA Membership Awards & Recognition

To celebrate the incredible work of local PTAs in rebuilding social capital and advocating for families, Utah PTA offers a series of monthly and end-of-year awards. Use these benchmarks to build momentum, structure your membership calendar, and earn state-level recognition for your hard work.

Monthly Incentive Awards (No Application Required)

Note: All monthly incentive awards are calculated automatically based on dues submitted to the Utah PTA office via Givebacks or manual check. Every qualifying PTA automatically receives a **Digital Badge** and an entry into a drawing for a **buy-one, get-one-free registration** to the Utah PTA Leadership Convention, unless otherwise noted.

September: "Early Bird Award"

- Criteria: Any local PTA that submits at least 50% of their previous year's total membership dues postmarked/submitted by September 25.

October: "On Target Award"

- Criteria: Any local PTA that submits at least 75% of their previous year's total membership dues postmarked/submitted by October 25.

November: "Trailblazer Award"

- Criteria: Any local PTA that submits 100% plus at least 1 additional member of their previous year's total membership dues postmarked/submitted by November 25.

December: "Beehive Award"

- Criteria: Any local PTA that submits 10% over their previous year's total membership dues postmarked/submitted by December 25.
- Prizes: Every qualifying PTA receives a Digital Badge and is entered into a drawing for a custom PTA Tablecloth in their choice of color (2 local PTA winners chosen via drawing).

February: "We Heart PTA Contest"

- Criteria: Any PTA that submits 14 or more new memberships from January 26th to February 25th. To be eligible, the unit must have already submitted at least 10 memberships before January 25.

Double Your Membership Award

- Criteria: Awarded to any local PTA whose current year membership total is at least 100% over (double) last year's total membership numbers by February 25th. The local PTA must have had at least 10 members in the previous year.
- Prizes: Every qualifying PTA receives a Digital Badge and a Goodie Bag (Guaranteed to all qualifying PTAs; no drawing).

Strategic Application Required Awards (Due March 1st unless otherwise noted)

These awards measure specific growth metrics, diverse community outreach, and advocacy partnerships.

The B.E.E. Award (Building Early Excellence)

- Criteria: Awarded to local PTAs that lay a strong, intentional foundation for the school

year by completing three key steps: designating a Membership Officer, establishing a clear membership goal for the year, and submitting a short strategic plan (3–5 sentences) outlining how they will reach that goal.

- Application Required: Yes (short online application submitted by **September 25th**).
- Prizes: Every qualifying PTA receives a Digital Badge. Additionally, one winning local PTA from each Region will be selected via drawing to receive a PTA Swag Bag.

Super Teachers & Staff Membership Award

- Criteria: Achieved by local PTAs that reach 100% membership participation among their school's full-time faculty, administration, and front office staff.
- Application Required: Yes (short confirmation form on utahpta.org)
- Prizes: Every qualifying PTA receives a Digital Badge, and a buy-one, get-one-free registration to the Utah PTA Leadership Convention (Guaranteed to all qualifying PTAs; no drawing).

MARS (Men Are Really Super) Award

- Criteria: Awarded to local PTAs whose total current membership roster consists of at least 40% male members (including fathers, grandfathers, male educators, and community members).
- Application Required: Yes (online submission verifying roster demographics)
- Prizes: Every qualifying PTA receives a Digital Badge, and a buy-one, get-one-free registration to the Utah PTA Leadership Convention (Guaranteed to all qualifying PTAs; no drawing).

Super PTSA Award

- Criteria: Awarded to local PTSAs whose total membership roster consists of 40% or more student members.
- Application Required: Yes (online submission verifying roster demographics)
- Prizes: Every qualifying PTA receives a Digital Badge, and 5 buy-one, get-one-free registrations to the Utah PTA Student Leadership Convention (Guaranteed to all qualifying PTAs; no drawing).

A Voice for Every Child Award

- Criteria: Awarded to local PTAs that successfully recruit at least 3 local elected officials (city council members, state legislators, mayors, school board members, etc.) to officially join their local PTA.
- Application Required: Yes (online application detailing the joined officials)
- Prizes: Every qualifying PTA receives a Digital Badge and entry into a state drawing for a buy-one, get-one-free registration to the Utah PTA Leadership Convention (2 winners chosen via drawing).

Award of Excellence in Membership Promotion

- Criteria: Awarded to two local PTAs that display exceptional creativity, data-driven strategy, and innovation in running a comprehensive, successful membership campaign.
- Application Required: Yes (formal application detailing strategy, outreach materials, and impact with pictures)
- Prizes: 2 qualifying PTAs will receive a Digital Badge, and a \$100 donation to the winning local PTAs (2 local PTA winners selected via committee review; no drawing).

"What Is Your PTA Story?" Individual Award

- Criteria: Open to all individual PTA members across Utah. Submissions consist of a personal written account detailing how they first became involved in the PTA and why they continue to volunteer.
- Application Required: Yes (individual online narrative submission)

- Prizes: Every qualifying entry receives a Digital Badge. Winners receive a custom Utah PTA Messenger Bag (2 individual winners selected via committee review; no drawing).
- Select individuals may also be invited to speak on stage at the Utah PTA Leadership Convention in May.

THE POWER GRID COMMUNICATIONS PLAYBOOK

Building social capital and fostering community connections requires clear, intentional communication. To shift our local communities from a compliance mindset to a connection mindset, we must actively tell the story of PTA. Use these foundational public relations tools to plug in, amplify your voice, and power up your community presence.

1. Public Relations Basics: Appointing Your Storyteller

Every council and local PTA needs a dedicated voice. When filling your board positions or committee chairs, look intentionally for a Storyteller, someone who is comfortable speaking in public, passionate about our mission, and maintains a consistently positive, solutions-oriented attitude.

Building Your Local Media Grid

Your Storyteller should compile a simple "Media Grid" (a spreadsheet of local contacts) at the beginning of the school year. Reach out to these contacts whenever you host a community event, launch an advocacy campaign, or celebrate a partnership milestone:

- Local Newspapers & Community Journals: Look up the generic "newsroom" or "editor" email addresses for your city's local paper.
- City Social Media Managers: Reach out to your local municipality's public information officer or social media coordinator to share community-wide events.
- School District Communications Team: Ensure your school's administration and district public relations team are looped into your major initiatives.

2. Media Interview Training: Staying Grounded & On-Message

Engaging with the media or speaking at a city council meeting can feel daunting, but a few simple strategies can help you maintain control and protect your board's message.

The "Hot Mic" Rule

Always assume a microphone is active. If you are wearing a lapel mic, standing near a podium, or participating in a recorded virtual meeting, treat every moment as if you are on the air. Private, internal board conversations should always remain separate from public presentation spaces.

The "Bridging" Technique

When asked polarizing or off-topic questions, use "bridging phrases" to pivot smoothly back to your core message.

- If asked a polarizing question about school boundaries or district politics, you can bridge by saying: "While there are many moving pieces to that issue, what our PTA is focusing on right now is..."
- Pivot back to your core pillars: "Our primary goal this year is building strong partnerships between families and educators, and that starts with..."

The Energy Trick

When conducting phone or virtual interviews with local reporters, stand up. Standing naturally opens your airway, improves your posture, and injects physical energy and passion into your voice—which transforms how your message is received on the other end of the line.

3. Civic Advocacy: The "Power Up PTA" Proclamation Template

Under Pillar 3: Power Up Advocacy, we focus on moving from passive observation to active civic engagement. One of the most effective ways to lower the friction for local advocacy is to have your town or city officially recognize the value of PTA.

Coordinate with your Council leadership to present the following template to your local Mayor or City Council ahead of the new school year:

SAMPLE CITY PROCLAMATION

> WHEREAS, strong family and community engagement are vital components of a successful public education system, fostering environments where all children can thrive; and
> WHEREAS, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) serves as a critical bridge of social capital, connecting parents, educators, and community leaders to advocate for the health, education, safety, and well-being of every child; and
> WHEREAS, the Utah PTA is actively working to "Power Up" local communities by strengthening organizational value, deepening family engagement, amplifying student advocacy, and expanding civic partnerships; and
> WHEREAS, local PTA and PTSA volunteers generously dedicate their time, energy, and resources to support our schools, humanize data, and ensure that every family has a voice;

> NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, [Name of Mayor], Mayor of the City of [City Name], do hereby proclaim October 2026 as "POWER UP PTA MONTH" in the City of [City Name], and encourage all citizens, businesses, and community members to join their local PTA/PTSA units to build a stronger, more connected community for our youth.

4. Expanding Our Footprint: Community Asset Mapping

True partnership requires looking outside the walls of the school building. To build "Bridging Social Capital," local PTAs can step out into public spaces to meet families where they already are. Consider mapping out and contacting these external community spaces to distribute materials, display "Power Up" flyers, or recruit grandparent/business memberships:

- **Public Libraries:** Ask to place PTA event calendars or literacy partnership materials at the front desk or on community bulletin boards.
- **Senior & Community Centers:** Connect with local senior centers to invite grandparents and community mentors to join your PTA or volunteer at local school events.
- **Civic & Service Clubs:** Reach out to local chapters of the Lions Club, Kiwanis, or Rotary International, as well as your local Chamber of Commerce, to pitch business memberships and collaborative community projects.

Region & Council Guidance – System Administrators of the Power Grid

Region and Council leaders are not just administrative checkpoints; they are the essential system administrators of the PTA power grid. While local PTAs focus on **bonding** capital (strengthening their immediate school communities), Regions and Councils are uniquely positioned to build **bridging** capital—connecting local PTAs to resources, district leadership, and broader community assets. Relationships before business.

Your role in helping local PTAs build community connection and grow membership is structured around three core areas: **Modeling, Shielding, and Mapping.**

1. Modeling: Practicing "Unreasonable Hospitality" at the Leadership Level

Local PTAs cannot build welcoming, connection-centered spaces if they do not experience them first. Councils and Regions can model the shift from transactional compliance to relational connection.

- **Humanize the Data:** Instead of running Council meetings that only focus on bylaws, financial deadlines, and audit tracking, dedicate 15 minutes to sharing local success stories or analyzing community feedback data.
- **The Listening Compass:** Use Council meetings to actively listen to local presidents' unique community challenges rather than just lecturing from an agenda. Show them how to run a "listening session" by hosting one for them.

2. Shielding: Lowering Friction and Protecting Local Focus

Local volunteer burnout happens when administrative friction overpowers the joy of community connection. While local PTAs retain full responsibility for maintaining their own compliance (such as timely submission of bylaws and financial reports to Utah PTA), Councils and Regions act as a strategic shield to streamline this process. They absorb macro-level operational stress so local

leaders can maximize their face-to-face time with families.

- **The Compliance Concierge:** Instead of acting merely as enforcement, Councils can act as facilitators. By providing clear reminders, step-by-step workshops, and proactive troubleshooting, Councils help local PTAs meet Utah PTA's standards quickly and accurately, preventing compliance from stalling local connection efforts.
- **The District-Wide Bridge:** Councils and Regions hold the primary collaborative relationships with School Board members, District Superintendents, and city-wide civic organizations. By fostering and maintaining supportive lines of communication with local School Boards and District Superintendents, Regions and Councils open doors and establish frameworks that individual local PTAs can easily plug into.
- **Centralized Resource Hubs:** Don't make every local PTA reinvent the wheel. Councils can provide pre-built templates, co-op graphics, and shared toolkits (like the Power Up Toolkit) to lower the structural burden on local boards.

3. Mapping: Identifying and Plugging "Dead Zones"

Regions and Councils have the bird's-eye view necessary to see where connections are breaking down across the community.

- **Diagnostic Cross-Pollination:** Use the *Local Grid Diagnostic Check* at the Council level to look for trends. If three local PTAs in your Council are struggling with "Pillar 4: Partnerships," organize a joint Council workshop pairing them with a neighboring PTA that excels in that area.
- **Mentorship Pipelines:** Establish an intentional pipeline where experienced, outgoing local presidents are recruited into Council roles, ensuring that hard-earned institutional knowledge and community relationships are preserved and passed down.
- **District Asset Mapping:** Region Chairs and Council Presidents should actively request a comprehensive list of schools within their boundaries. Audit their current parent-organization status (PTA, PTO, or unorganized) to identify "dead zones."
- **Admin Education Pipelines:** Schedule early-summer meetings with school district superintendents and local principals. Go in with a posture of service: ask "How can our PTA grid support your district's specific goals this year?" Coordinate with the Utah PTA Board of Directors to support district outreach. When meeting with local principals, share materials provided by the state that outline the legal protections, insurance structures, and community value of an official PTA unit.

The Region & Council Core Vision

Remember: A local PTA's membership growth is a lagging indicator of their community connection. Our primary focus as Region and Council leaders is to fuel that connection; the membership growth will naturally follow. When a local PTA feels unplugged, dark, or stalled, it is our greatest opportunity to step in as a partner—offering the tools, templates, and personal encouragement they need to help them power back up.

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