

DOS AND DON'TS OF PARTNERING WITH ADMINISTRATORS

Do:

- **Plan together.** Learn administration goals and discuss how your PTA can engage families in supporting those goals.
- **Connect to resources.** Talk with the principal about how state and National PTA programs and resources support and enhance student learning.
- **Be respectful.** You do not always have to agree. Find a way to communicate in a professional and respectful manner with your school's leadership.
- **Differentiate.** Help school administration understand that your Local PTA Unit is a separate and independent child advocacy group, part of and supported by a large and experienced association.
- **Meet regularly.** Consider a regular monthly coffee or lunch with the principal or arrange a regular phone call. Invite the superintendent to Board meetings. Stay in touch.
- **Make the connection visible.** Ask your principal to provide a report at PTA meetings, or to write an article for your PTA's newsletter or post for the PTA blog. Plan an open-to-all "chat with the principal" or "coffee with the superintendent."
- **Engage families.** Share the National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships materials. Collaborate on building better family engagement and improving student success. Consider registering in the National PTA Schools of Excellence program.
- **Engage community.** Invite community groups or youth-serving organizations to the school for PTA events. With the principal, identify community service opportunities for families.
- **Encourage participation in the budget process.** Give parents the info they need to effectively advocate during budget time. Help parents support the education budget.
- **Stay on the same page.** Follow up all phone calls and meetings with a summary of what was discussed and confirmation of any action steps to be taken by the PTA or administration.
- **Ask to speak at teacher meetings.** Ask to be treated as a partner in education, a vital part of the connection between home and school.

Don't:

- **Be adversarial.** Developing a working relationship is well worth the effort. Find common ground. Model civil discourse, even if it is difficult to deal with administration.
- **Comingle funds.** Mixing private and public funds is forbidden. No PTA funds should ever be deposited in a school account and no school funds should find their way into a PTA account.
- **Give up control of the checkbook.** PTA is a separate entity from the school. PTA funds are controlled by PTA members and Board. The checkbook resides with the Treasurer.
- **Cede control of PTA meetings.** All members—even administrators—have the same rights at meetings. The PTA President or the President's delegate runs the PTA meeting, in compliance with PTA Bylaws and using Robert's Rules.
- **Get in trouble with the IRS.** Know the rules and file the proper forms with the IRS. PTA's funds are not school funds; do not use the school's EIN. Consult your state PTA if you have questions.
- **Open your PTA to theft.** No administrator wants to deal with the negative publicity surrounding a PTA's poor money management. Use good business judgment, ensure financial reports and audits happen, and follow your state PTA's rules about money-handling.
- **Entangle administration in personality issues.** Sometimes personal issues interfere with PTA function. To maintain a professional, credible relationship with administration, work through your personal problems without involving administration. Seek help, if necessary, from your state PTA.
- **Become an ATM.** PTA funds are raised to further PTA's mission and goals, not to supplement school budgets. Collaborate with administration, but do not allow your PTA to be viewed as a bottomless source of funding available for all administration requests. Raise awareness rather than raise funds.