

# Enhancing Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Your PTA

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How do you improve your PTA's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in a meaningful way? **Roger Minott Sherman Elementary PTA**, in Fairfield, Conn., has a few valuable tips—they received a 2019 [Jan Harp Domene Award](#) for implementing several strategies to help their community embrace and value diverse perspectives. Discover a few of their keys to success below to get started in your community!

## **Make It Easier for Families to Be Involved**

PTAs can diversify their membership by removing some of the barriers that prevent families from engaging. All families care about their child's education, but some have more time and more resources to attend events and meetings. Instead of asking families to shift their schedules or miss work to attend, find ways to bring the information to them.

Sherman Elementary PTA found success by...

- Shifting PTA meetings from midday to nighttime
- Livestreaming PTA meetings for parents and caregivers who weren't able attend in person
- Providing more updates for families on the school website and via email blasts
- Offering scholarships for PTA memberships and for admission to events and programs

## **Go Beyond One-Time Events About Diversity**

Issues of diversity, equity and inclusion should be topics for ongoing discussion. While PTAs can begin to improve their diversity, equity and inclusion efforts with a specific event or series of events, like a multicultural night or a social justice book club, the ultimate goal should be to naturally embed these conversations and initiatives into everyday life.

Sherman Elementary PTA did just that. They began their diversity, equity and inclusion work by implementing a "Diversity Day." The following year they expanded to hosting a "Diversity Week" and moving forward, they plan to have diversity programming throughout the year. Through this programming they will...

- **Ensure all children and their families are represented in the curriculum.** Sherman Elementary PTA's Diversity Week embedded activities related to different cultures, traditions, and ethnicities throughout the curriculum, including in-class conversations, story time, art projects and more. As Sherman Elementary PTA works to expand their efforts beyond Diversity Week, they are collaborating with the librarian to ensure that children have access to diverse books all year round. They are also working to build a library display to include materials relevant to the variety of themes covered during diversity week including ability, gender, culture and more.
- **Create opportunities for cross-cultural exchange.** Since their school's student population is 86% white, it was essential to look beyond their school walls to help facilitate relationships between different races and cultures. Sherman Elementary PTA plans to establish a pen pal program with a neighboring school district to promote understanding between cultures.
- **Elevate diverse voices and stories to help the community understand new perspectives.** At Sherman Elementary PTA meetings, volunteers presented on topics that were relevant to them—speaking to their own experiences around family diversity, differences in ability, and more. Moving forward, the PTA is eager to invite guests to speak at school-wide or grade-level assemblies to speak further on these and other issues.