

# Illinois PTA<sup>®</sup> Bulletin

*everychild.onevoice.<sup>®</sup>*

*"Ensuring Every Child's Future"*

## A Message from our Guest Writer

***Dr. Chris Koch, State Superintendent, Illinois State Board of Education***

We begin every school year with renewed hope and a chance to provide a quality educational experience for Illinois students. Our education system is experiencing major changes, from the federal government all the way down to your local school. For the United States to remain competitive, we must ensure that our students receive a quality public education, and ensure that learning evolves with the current global environment.

I wanted to make you aware of some important developments that are taking place with education. Sadly, student performance in the United States is increasingly falling behind that of other countries. In fact, reading performance of high school students has steadily decreased for more than 25 years! Additionally, many other countries are graduating more students who are prepared for college and careers with a realization that what students need to know and be able to do for college is no different than the knowledge and skills for careers beyond entry-level, low paying jobs.

In response to this crisis, we are reviewing the Illinois Learning Standards, which define what all students in all Illinois public schools should know and be able to do before they graduate. We are reviewing our Illinois Learning Standards against standards from countries around the world that consistently perform well in international comparisons. We have had Illinois high school, community college and higher education teachers working together to review these standards for English and Math and we will be pursuing a review of other subjects in the near future. We will then align our state tests to these learning standards to bring coherence between our state standards, what is taught locally and college entry requirements.

We are also working toward an education system that will allow us to review high school course taking and the difficulty of those courses. We know that the courses students take have a great impact on their future success. We want to help you and your children to be able to understand the impact of their choices earlier and to know what levels of progress they must achieve in order to pursue their interests whatever those may be.

Working together we can ensure your child receives the best education possible, creating a better world for us all in the future.

Best wishes for the school year.



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## A Message From Our President



Debra Strauss  
Illinois PTA President

Illinois PTA, “Ensuring Every Child’s Future.” That seems a daunting task and some would say an impossible one. The one certainty is that no one can do it alone and this is where PTA plays its most crucial role.

- ◆ Partnering with schools to ensure a welcoming environment for all,
- ◆ Establishing great lines of communication between home and classroom,
- ◆ Providing parents programs that share ways in which parents can support student achievement at home,
- ◆ Giving parents a voice to speak up for children,
- ◆ Sharing in the decisions that affect our children and families, and
- ◆ Collaborating with community members to connect students, families and staff to expand learning opportunities, community services and civic participation.

These six bullets are the PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and are research based to show “what parents, schools and communities can do together to support student success.”

Illinois PTA continues to establish and strengthen connections with outside agencies and organizations that can serve as resources to all of us in meeting the above standards. Make sure you have read the article on the front cover of this *BULLETIN* by Dr. Chris Koch – it’s a great example of working together and sharing important information from the experts to our members.

Today there are critical shortages in funding for education, health and human services and so many other areas. Your PTA can provide so much by way of programs, resources and relationships to help bridge the gap being felt in our schools. Visit the Illinois PTA website, [www.illinoispta.org](http://www.illinoispta.org), and find ideas for your PTA to offer to your boards, your members and your school. Share this newsletter with committees on your board and in your own newsletter so that your members know what is going on around the state. Reach out and include everyone in the work that you do.

Together we will “Ensure Every Child’s Future!”

~ Deb

## Continuing Education

By: Brenda Diehl, Leadership Development Chairman  
email: [bdiehl2@juno.com](mailto:bdiehl2@juno.com), phone: 217-359-0943

As you meet your challenge of leading the PTA, you might find that there are some things you don’t know. You can rest assured that the PTA provides many opportunities to obtain the tools you need to make your job easier!

You might find that the knowledge you gain through your PTA experiences will help you in other areas of your life. Are you ever a bit confused when you watch a school board meeting or city council meeting? Would you like to be more confident when you participate in meetings and training sessions at your place of employment? Do you ever feel a bit intimidated when you meet with your child’s teacher or principal?

Although the Illinois PTA has offered a variety of training courses for many years, the courses have been recently updated and improved and many new course leaders have been trained.

The **Illinois PTA University Degree Program** is ready and available to you!

Start by working towards earning your “Bachelor’s Degree.” The **PTA Road to Success** covers the PTA structure, policies, roles of officers and parliamentary procedure. Take the **PTA Money Matters** course for an introduction to PTA financial considerations. Attending a PTA district or council meeting or workshop; a state Legislation Conference or state workshop and the Illinois PTA Convention are requirements for obtaining the “Bachelor’s Degree.”

Now is the time to get started! Once you receive your “Bachelor’s Degree,” you can earn your “Masters Degree” and your “Doctoral Degree!” You might have already completed some of the requirements, and not even know it!

For more information on signing up for **Illinois PTA University** contact your District Director, designated state board representative, Illinois PTA Leadership Development Chairman, Local Unit Packet or the Illinois PTA website: [www.illinoispta.org](http://www.illinoispta.org).

## America's PTA



If you were unable to join me at the national convention in Fort Lauderdale this past June, let me say once again how incredibly grateful I am that you have entrusted me to be the first ever male National President of PTA. But I owe you even more thanks for your decision to be involved in this association at this time in our history.

We have reached a defining moment, and members committed to our mission have work to do. When faced with the question of whether you, personally, were committed to helping PTA reach out to *all* communities, you have stood up and said, "Yes!" When given a choice between supporting your child and supporting *all* children—even knowing the challenges involved—the decision was clear. Because it's not really one *or* the other: by working on behalf of America's students, you truly are helping your student, your family, and your school.

These can't just be words, however. We are asking you to follow through in action as well. There is no question that PTA must work harder on its growth and its diversity. The only question is: what will *you* do to help PTA expand into the communities where it is most needed? We need more men to be involved in PTA, and in children's lives. Will you help PTA raise its male membership from 10% to 20% over the next two years? We need better representation in PTA from the very youth we have chosen to serve. Will you help PTSAs get more students to join us? We need to improve our service to the families who have members serving in our military. Will you help the families in your community when their loved one gets deployed overseas?

Now is the time for serious people to get engaged. At a time when we need to ask everyone in our schools and communities—especially those who have never been asked before—to become part of the PTA family, we need serious people. Serious people who will embrace new ideas, new methods, and a new look. Serious people who will make PTA the family experience it needs to be: a place where all families are welcome. Please join me as we make our PTA, *America's PTA*.

Charles J. "Chuck" Saylor  
PTA National President  
[PTA.org/chucksaylor](http://PTA.org/chucksaylor)

## National PTA Update: The State of the Association

*A special message from Chuck Saylor*

As you may know, 113 years ago PTA was founded and chartered in Washington DC; in the 1930's the association relocated to Chicago; a central hub for the railroad industry. Several years ago PTA outgrew its building in downtown and has since been working from leased property. From the day PTA sold its building, PTA has been working to find our association a new home.

On August 14, 2009, the PTA Board voted unanimously to purchase a property in the Washington DC area... So we're moving back home! In moving our headquarters back to Washington, DC, PTA will be able to have an appreciable asset for our association, we'll be in the city that houses the most non-profits in the nation, and we'll be better positioned to continue being the premier parent association in the country on Capitol Hill. These opportunities will allow PTA to grow our leadership and service capabilities, thus making us more attractive to a wider array of prospective donors.

## PTA Great Idea Bank Briefs

*Source: [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)*

National PTA has revamped the Great Idea Bank and relaunched it as a social and idea-sharing network: [www.ptagreatideabank.org](http://www.ptagreatideabank.org). Using the Ning.com platform, this website will enable parents to interact and learn from each other how to overcome today's parenting challenges. PTA leaders and members can also use it to share ideas on how to run PTAs and PTA events more effectively.

The site features discussion forums on topics such as student achievement and parents and schools working together. Users can add to conversations, start new discussions, join groups devoted to specific topics (such as PTA Healthy Lifestyles), or post photos from their events. A downloadable user guide is available.

Please consider linking to [ptagreatideabank.org](http://ptagreatideabank.org). Join up and spread the word. A set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is attached. The site's success depends on proven, trusted ideas from peers, so the more people contributing to the site, the better. For the PTA Great Idea Bank User Guide, visit [PTA.org/GIB/PTA Great Idea Bank.doc](http://PTA.org/GIB/PTA%20Great%20Idea%20Bank.doc).

## Back-to-School with Jewel Osco Events

Illinois PTA was invited to participate in 4 Back-to-School, Jewel-Osco sponsored events. Three of the events were in Chicago and one was in Aurora, all of them in Latino communities. Jewel-Osco provided us, free of charge, a 10x10 tent and we provided the volunteers to man the tent, material to distribute and helium filled balloons with the PTA logo to all children who asked. The events took place the first two weeks of August, as the hot weather arrived and unfortunately, for the last event, the rain which brought the last event to an early end.

Families who showed proof of purchase of \$50.00 from Jewel received a back-to-school backpack full of school supplies. There were many other companies and organizations also present to provide services and information to families. During the course of the 4 days approximately 900 families visited the event.

Illinois PTA was lucky to have several extra special volunteers to give up their weekends to “man” the tent and greet families with PTA hospitality, answer their questions and send them home with lots of PTA information.



**FREE** Immunization shots. Please bring your child's prior shot records.



Come and enjoy the **SCHOOL ZONE**. There will be games, raffles and activities for the whole family!

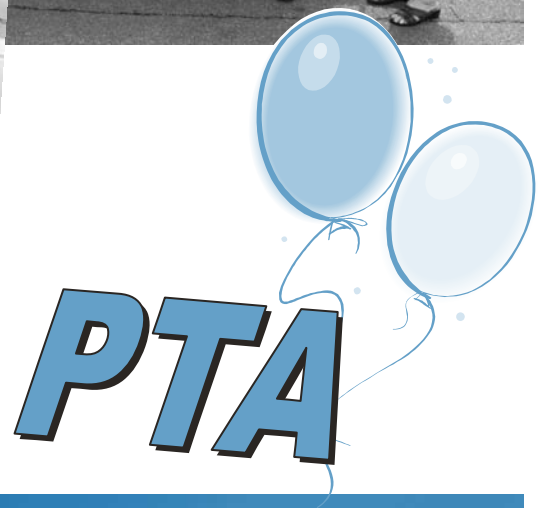


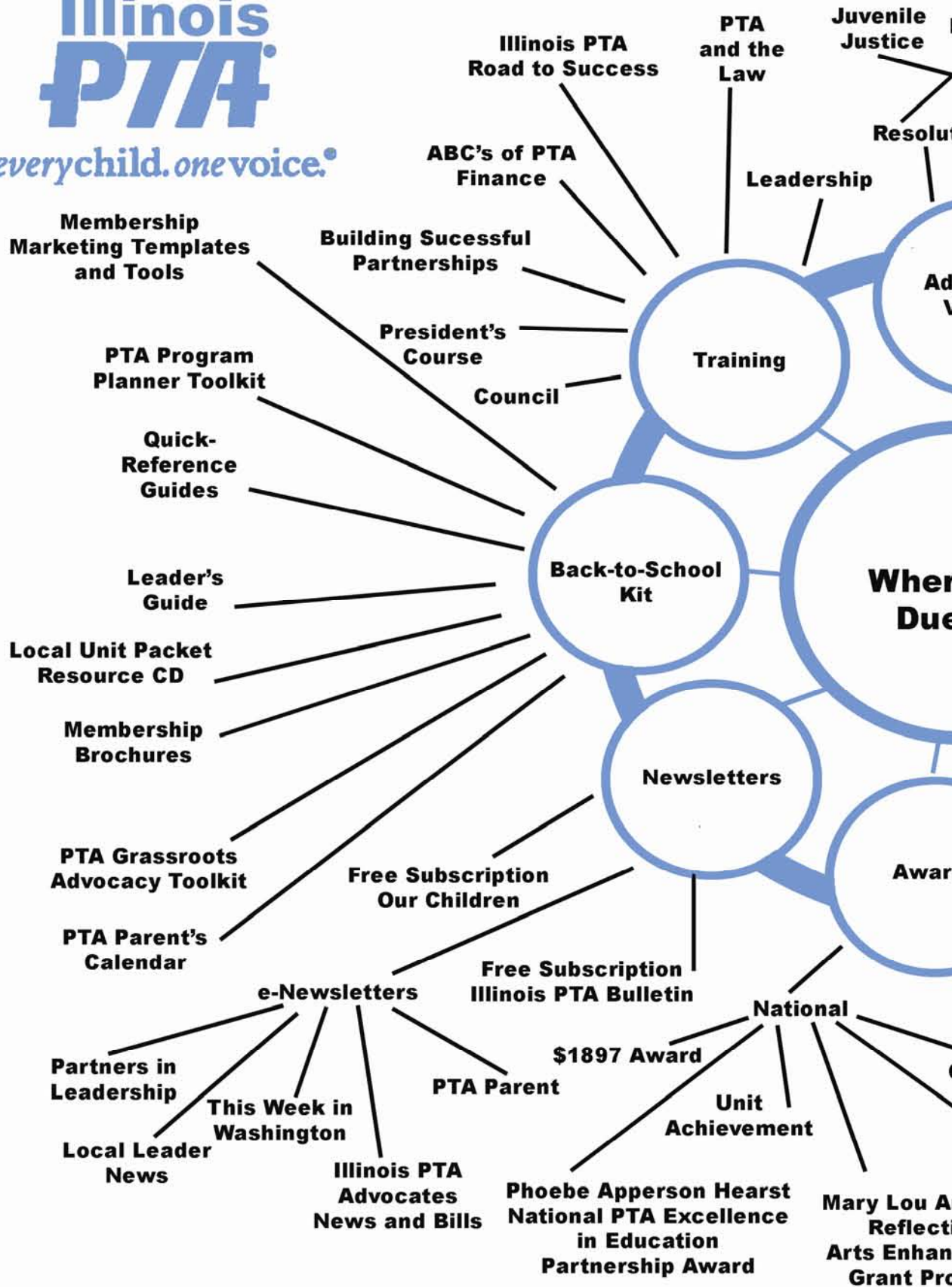

**¡MOCHILA GRATIS**  
**con útiles escolares**  
 con la compra de \$50\* en Jewel-Osco!

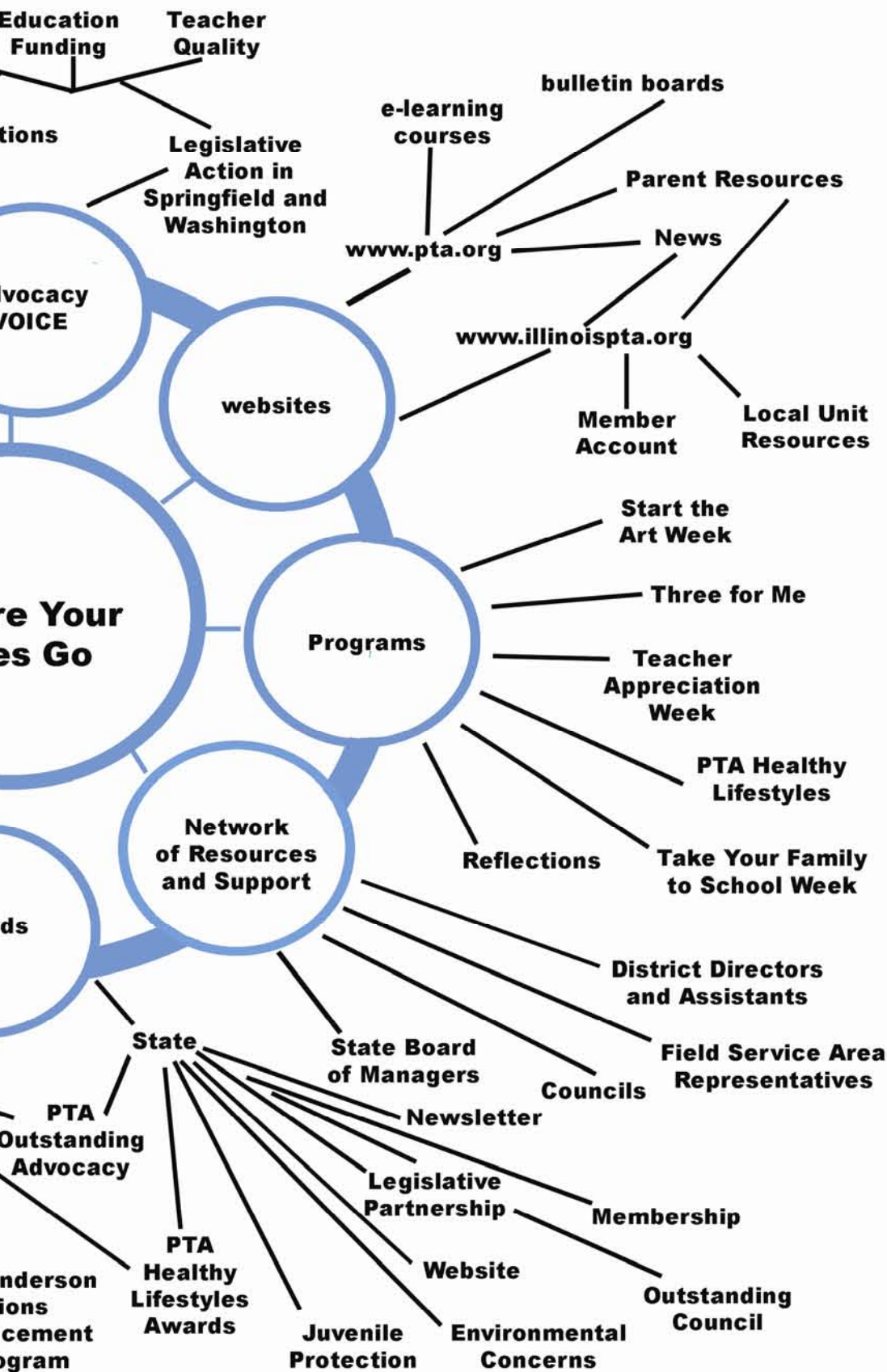
**Ala Escuela con Jewel-Osco**

# Partnerships at Work!

## Reaching Out







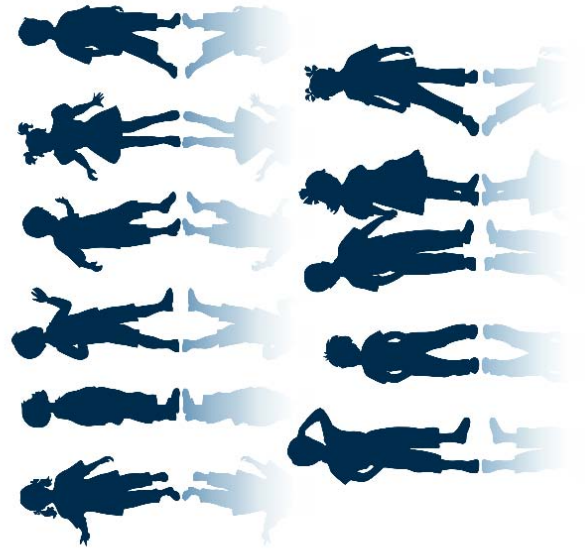
# The Value of PTA

**Illinois**  
**PTA**<sup>®</sup>

*every child. one voice.*<sup>®</sup>

# ILLINOIS PTA CONVENTION

March 12—14, 2010



# *Ensuring Every Child's Future by Engaging Each Child's Community*

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*Child Advocacy, Parent Education, Legislative Action,  
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- 1 Be a powerful voice for all children
- 2 Provide relevant resources for your families and community
- 3 Become strong advocates for the education and well-being of every child

## PTA PROMOTES PROGRESS OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

By: Gretchen L. McDowell, Consultant, State Legislation

From the beginning of PTA activity in Illinois, juvenile justice has been high on the list of priorities. But especially since the adoption of a series of recommendations in 1999, based on a two year study of the juvenile justice system, the Illinois PTA has focused a good deal of effort on improving the laws and regulations that address children and youth in our State who have either found themselves in the care of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

At the 2009 Illinois PTA Convention, a new report, *Ten Years of Progress*, was presented, and the recommendations of this report replaced those of the 1999 report. This entire report can be found on the Illinois PTA website, [www.illinoispta.org](http://www.illinoispta.org). Click on Taking Action, then Juvenile Justice and then Ten Years of Progress.

Many of the new recommendations reflect the progress made in the last ten years, and give our members and all those reading the report, new insight into what we need to support in order to improve the way children and youth in the system are treated. After each recommendation and its narrative, Action Suggestions are offered to provide some helpful ideas on how to promote that recommendation.

The leadership of the Illinois PTA is eager to assist local units and members help implement the positions of “Ten Years of Progress.”

It is exciting to realize that with the help of the advocacy of the Illinois PTA, juvenile justice is improving. For example, in the past few years:

- ◆ A new separate Department of Juvenile Justice has been created.
- ◆ Youths who are accused of a misdemeanor will be considered juveniles until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Previously, they were treated as adults. (Our next step is to have all youths be considered juveniles until they turn 18.)
- ◆ Many drug cases of youths that previously were automatically put into adult court now remain in the juvenile court – where the offenders can receive the treatment they need to quit abusing drugs.
- ◆ We need to continue the pressure to keep youths out of corrections, especially by a program called “ReDeploy Illinois” that provides treatment for youths in their own community, instead of locking them up. This program is successful in helping kids, and is cheaper than incarceration!

PTA members can all be proud of their contribution to improving the lives of children in Illinois who have been cared for by DCFS and those who have broken the law. Do read the *Ten Years Of Progress* and help *our* children by working to make its recommendations into reality.



## PTA WORKING WITH THE LEGISLATURE ON ISSUES

By: Barb Quinn, Legislation Chair

**NOW** is a great time to look at legislative issues we have been following this year and then take the time to contact legislators as they prepare to return to Springfield for the veto sessions **October 14 – 16**, then again **October 28 – 30**.

The issues we have spent so much time talking about that still need the attention of our legislators include our continuing concerns with the funding of essential services, such as education, children's mental health, juvenile justice and early childhood. Ask your legislators how they think we can adequately fund these areas.

The Illinois PTA continues in its strong support for **HB174 as amended by the Senate** because it will address the issue of necessary state revenue to support essential services. The full text of our position may be found on the Illinois PTA website, [www.illinoispta.org](http://www.illinoispta.org) under the Legislation tab.

There is still time to contact the Governor as well, thanking him for restoring some programs with discretionary dollars, but asking him to continue to seek additional revenue.

Looking farther ahead, the 2010 General Primary Election will be conducted on **Tuesday, February 2, 2010**. The General Election will be conducted on **Tuesday, November 2, 2010**. Before each of these events is a great time for local units, councils and districts to help our members and communities share our positions with our legislators (with visits and letters) and hear their positions before we vote (especially at a Candidates Forum). So, consider:

- ◆ Providing **voter registrars** at Back to School events; (for further information, contact your County clerk.
- ◆ Hosting a **Candidates Forum** so that your members and your community can be well-informed about the candidates' positions on issues; (for a step-by-step How To, see the *Illinois PTA Answer Book*)
- ◆ Encouraging your members to exercise the **right to vote**.

Remember that as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, you **must be non-partisan**, which means you as PTA, *cannot support or oppose* candidates for office at any level including school boards or local school councils.

Contact Legislation Chairman Barbara Quinn and she will be sure a Member of the Illinois PTA Legislation Team will provide you with assistance or more information.

2009-2010 Theme:  
"Beauty is..."



Learn more at  
[PTAreflections.org](http://PTAreflections.org)

### 40 Years of Creativity – PTA Reflections

Source: National PTA; PTA Partners in Leadership, Aug 2009

The PTA Reflections Program is celebrating its 40th anniversary! With your support, this program has encouraged millions of students from preschool through high school to share with us their unique perspectives, creativity, and artistic talents. More than 500,000 pieces of artwork were submitted last year alone. With your support, we can reach a million— or more— this year.

We encourage all units to take part in the 2009–2010 program. Log onto [PTAreflections.org](http://PTAreflections.org) for the national rules and forms, customizable fliers and posters, and, new this year, a Local Arts Chair Guide on how to run the Reflections Program. There's an entire section of the site for states, too. Just select "How to Begin."

## **ILLINOIS PTA CONTINUING POSITIONS**

Continuing positions are active and current positions of the Illinois PTA. They are established to preserve positions taken in Resolutions that are more than three years old and according to our bylaws would otherwise be dropped. See Article XIX, Sections 3 and 4.

### ***Environment Concerns***

We will support legislation banning mass releases (launches) of latex and/or Mylar balloons. (1990)

We will support legislation that would protect children from the detrimental effects of electromagnetic fields. (1991)

We will support legislation to enforce more stringent standards for protection from indoor air contaminants as research continues to reveal sources and for improved ventilation standards and building codes for schools. (1998)

### ***Financing Public Schools***

We will actively support appropriating funds to permit school districts to employ teachers in a sufficient number to maintain a desirable pupil-teacher ratio, which should not preclude the utilization in appropriate situations of very large or very small groups. (1978)

We support enforcement of the State Mandates Act's intent that no legislation proposing new mandates for local school districts may be imposed without a provision for state funding. (1982)

We will seek the appropriation of sufficient funds for elementary and secondary schools so that the state does provide the primary cost of public education statewide, and so that school districts can have adequate funding to provide quality teachers and curricula while maintaining maximum control by local school boards. (1983)

### ***Health Issues***

We support including age appropriate information on eating disorders, healthy weight and risks of inadequate nutrition in health class curricula and teacher in-service opportunities. (2000)

We support the requirement of Vision Examination Before Entering Kindergarten. (2004)

Believing that the rise in childhood obesity has many documented negative effects on children, the Illinois PTA will continue to work with cooperating agencies and health professionals on the best practices in identifying and treating childhood obesity and disseminating timely information to our constituent organizations. (2005)

### ***Juvenile Justice***

We will work for legislation and funding to provide community programs to intervene with children who come into contact with the police as a result of childish wrong doings before the child's activities escalate into criminal acts demanding incarceration. (2001)

We urge PTA units to work within their county to improve its juvenile justice system, including pre-trial detention policies, and seek alternatives to pre-trial detention policies, and seek alternatives to pre-trial secure detention. PTAs are urged to join or form coalitions to address juvenile justice issues. (2001)

We strongly support adequate state funding for counties to provide alternative programs and services for the treatment of juvenile offenders to reduce the need for confinement in a Department of Juvenile Justice facility. (2003)

## **ILLINOIS PTA CONTINUING POSITIONS (continued)**

### ***Multi-Media***

We support television networks moderating the level of violence in programming and made-for-TV movies. (1987)

We support cautionary labeling of videotapes, recorded music, and music videos, which go beyond the emotional maturity level of some children and youth, so that parents may exercise parental discretion in supervising their children's viewing habits. (1987)

We support video outlets keeping X-rated videotapes in a separate area not open to children. (1987)

We oppose any advertising, which does not display a high sense of ethics and morality. (1987)

### ***Non-Public Schools and Parental Choice***

We strongly oppose the use of public funds for non-public schools and will continue to work against any such appropriation of funds. We will participate in court actions instituted to challenge any laws, which would provide such aid. (1970)

We oppose requiring school boards to bus non-public students beyond district boundaries. (1980)

While we continue to oppose the use of public funds in private schools, we will actively seek and support legislation that would require that non-public schools now receiving public funds or assistance meet all requirements demanded of public schools. (1985)

We reaffirm the position to oppose Parental Choice legislation that would negatively impact local school funding or could result in inequitable educational opportunities for all children. (1989)

### ***Safety Issues***

We support legislation to classify BB and pellet guns as Dangerous Weapons, Category II, with appropriate punishment for assaults. (1999)

We support legislation for a Child Access Prevention (CAP) law in Illinois that requires adults to keep guns safely and securely away from children, or be held criminally liable. (1999)

We support legislation requiring all riders under the age of 16, of all-terrain vehicles, mopeds, scooters, mini-bikes, and motorcycles, to wear helmets approved by the Department of Transportation and/or Snell Memorial Foundation, and support a mandatory penalty for the adult operator of a motorcycle who allows a child to ride without an appropriate helmet. (2000)

We will provide information and resources to constituent bodies on the prevention of bullying, encouraging them to share this information with parents, to assist parent involvement in development and implementation of student discipline policy and we will encourage the Illinois State Board of Education and Association of School Boards to provide resources and training to teachers in conflict resolution and the prevention of social conflicts and bullying (2002)

We urge local units to disseminate information regarding backpack safety and to work with school staff to eliminate hazards associated with backpacks. (2003)

## WHERE DO WE STAND?

By: Rhonda Jenkins, Resolutions Chair

As you may be aware, the Illinois PTA has a legislation platform and adopts resolutions each year at convention. But did you know that some of those resolutions go on to become “Continuing Positions” of the Illinois PTA? According to our bylaws, Article XIX, Section 3:

*“All previously adopted resolutions shall be reviewed annually in accordance with the prescribed procedures of the state board of managers. Adopted resolutions shall remain active after adoption:*

- a. *unless within three (3) years the provisions have been met;*
- b. *for a period of three (3) years at which time they shall be dropped; or*
- c. *unless designated continuing positions of the Illinois PTA.”*

The continuing swirl of funding and budget issues surrounding the State of Illinois has had to be our foremost action item. However, it occurred to me that because of this we may not have provided information regarding our continuing positions. Take a moment to read over the following listing of Illinois PTA Continuing Positions convention delegates have considered important through the years.

Just a reminder: Don’t forget to look over your *Illinois PTA “Making it Real” Call for Resolutions* found in your Local Unit Packet that you received at the beginning of the school year. The deadline for resolution submission is December 15, 2009.

Rhonda G. Jenkins  
Illinois PTA Resolutions Chairman  
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Millstadt, IL 62260  
(618) 476-3183  
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## Check Out the New Look on the Web Site!

By: Mary Ann Daugherty, Technology Chairman

The Illinois PTA Web site has a new look at the old address: <http://www.illinoispta.org>. We are still a work in progress and as time goes by, additional information will be added. The site has been updated to allow users easier access to information that is needed to operate the local unit PTA and councils in an effective manner.

The **INFORMATION** page includes informative tri-folds, legislation white papers, order forms, award applications, and other documents, which will enhance your knowledge of PTA.

The “**Questions**” area will allow you to send an email about your questions and concerns, which will be forwarded to the appropriate person so that you will get the best possible answer.

### Forms:

Some of the forms also have been placed in strategic areas i.e. the *Scholarship* page, which contains Adobe (.pdf) files that will allow you to read an explanation about the scholarship awards, order scholarship awards, and how your PTA unit can help with donations to the Illinois PTA Scholarship Program.

Almost all of the Adobe (.pdf) forms will be interactive, meaning that you may fill them out online, save the document, and/or email it to the appropriate person if you wish. To accomplish this you will need to download **Adobe Reader**, which is a free program at: <http://get.adobe.com/reader> if you do not already have this program.

### New:

New to this site is a listing of vacancies on the state board of managers. Soon, there will be a description of the responsibilities of each vacant area. If you find one that interests you, the members of the Board Development and Nominating Committee are listed as well for you to contact. You may easily contact any member of the state board on the *State Board of Managers* page and access their emails.

We hope that you will take advantage of the Web site. Access the site often because legislative issues that require attention by our members will be updated as needed. Thanks for your support of this endeavor. If you have any concerns about the site, you may contact the webmaster with those concerns.



## Going Green Can save you Green \$\$\$\$\$\$

By: Terry Christenson, Environmental Chairman

Are you challenged by the current financial crisis and recessionary woes? While the world maybe watching Wall Street, many of us in PTA are struggling to preserve our own checkbook on Main Street. We all know that there doesn't seem to be a quick fix for the economy, but there are some things you can start doing today that will have a real impact on your family's finances as well as the health of the environment. Here are five easy changes that you can make which will save you money each month, all, while helping to conserve energy and reduce waste. The more changes you make the money you can save.

### Share a ride:

Car-pooling can save a boatload of money, and you don't have to own a new model hybrid to realize the savings either (although it would be a big plus). Not sure how to start? Try to locate available commuters at work through the use of email lists and company bulletin boards. Check with your neighbors and friends to see if you can coordinate scheduling. In addition, see if your employer will allow you to work from home one day a week or stack your schedule to work 40 hours in four days instead of five.

### Go with a lower flow:

The average American household runs four, eight-minute showers per day, requiring about 20 gallons of heated water at the rate of 2.5 gallons going down the drain per minute per person. Instead of turning the main water valve off on your kids when eight minutes are up, you can reduce the water output from your showerhead to save on energy costs. Try to install a newer low-flow showerhead to reduce your hot water consumption to 1.59 gallons or less per minute per shower. If you're concerned about sacrificing water pressure, don't be. Today's efficient low-flow showerheads preserve water and pressure by mixing air with the water flow. They're also easy to install yourself, so there's no need to hire a professional.

### Brown bag your lunch:

Buying your lunch every day during the workweek can seriously dent your budget. Even when exercising frugality, the average cost of a meal and drink comes to at least \$6 per day or \$120 each month. According to the U.S. Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, bringing lunch to work costs about 45-50 percent less than buying it. That means you can pare down your workweek lunch expense to less than \$15 per week. Why not Buy only what you'll consume during the workweek to avoid wasting food by the weekend. In addition, select a variety of sandwich fixings, whole grain breads, and ready-to-go fresh fruit and vegetables to avoid boredom. Rinse and reuse sandwich bags to reduce waste and save even more. Alternately, tote your lunch in glass or reusable containers whenever possible. Use a cloth bag or a shopping bag that's easy to reuse.

### Wake up, smell the coffee:

Making your coffee at home will run about \$0.12-0.28 per cup -- small beans compared to store-bought. Assuming the higher end of that estimate calculates to just \$1.40 per week or \$5.60 each month. For that sweet price, you can afford to take a refill to the office in a reusable travel mug (\$11.20 per month) for a later pick-me-up. Why not Invest in a no-frills coffeemaker (\$15 and up), if you don't already own one. Coffee prices vary, but even fair-trade, organic coffee can be found for less than \$15 a pound. The cost of a splash of milk or flavored creamer is minimal. Keeping the disposable coffee cup out of landfill: priceless.

### Stay home for dinner:

Stay home for dinner and save. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, American households spend an average of \$3,034 a year on take-out food and dining at restaurants. Curbing this habit will not only save you money, but will also reduce the amount of plastic and Styrofoam containers being tossed into the trash. Why not plan meals ahead. You should know what's for dinner before lunchtime rolls around, or you'll be more likely to pull out the take-out menus. Also, take advantage of leftovers from home-cooked meals by freezing them for another night's meal. However, you may be able to realize even greater savings..

You can also feel good about the fact that these simple strategies are good for the environment. For each money-saving action you commit to undertake, you'll be helping to reduce energy and disposable waste every day. And, if you can save this much each month doing it, just imagine the effect your actions will have year after year. The possibilities are endless and the choice is yours. Try these tips and see if going green really can save you green.

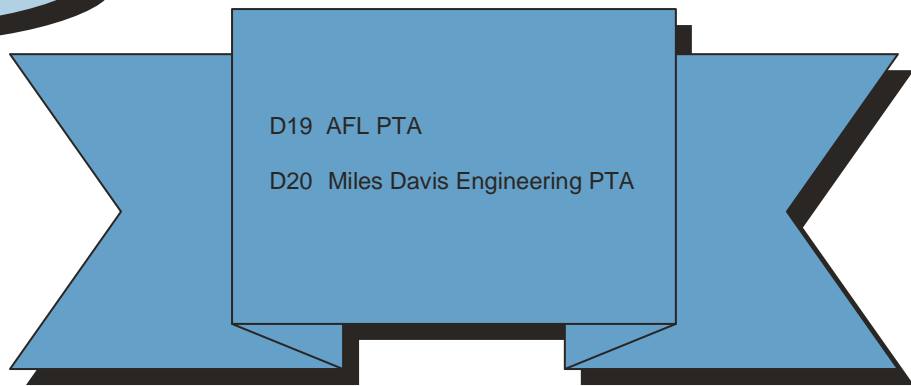
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