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HISTORICAL NOTES



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On May 30, 1900, the fourth state branch of what is now the National Congress of Parents and Teachers was organized in Evanston, Illinois. In February 1897, delegates from all over the country formed the National Congress of Mothers was formed in Washington, D.C. Among the sixteen attendees from Illinois was Mrs. Roger B. McMullen of Evanston, later to be auditor and a vice president of the National body. With the aid of local women's clubs, educators, and jurists, Mrs. McMullen organized the Illinois Congress of Mothers and was elected its first president.

Although some of the present committees had their beginnings then, the first years were devoted largely to organizing Mothers' Clubs throughout the state. Some of these became member-clubs, while others, including women's clubs, "affiliated" with the Illinois PTA, a practice discontinued in 1929.

In 1906, the first state handbook, apparently the first of any State Congress, was published as a Biennial Announcement. Since 1914, it has been issued annually as the Illinois PTA *Yearbook*.

A recognized social force by 1910, the Illinois PTA could then give more time to project activities. Many new committees were created, some concerned with war work and so short-lived, others forerunners of present committees.

Outstanding in World War I work was the operation from 1917 to 1921 of "The Jolly Tar" in an old mansion in Waukegan. This club for sailors on liberty from the Great Lakes Naval Station was unique in the country for its homelike atmosphere.

The *Illinois Parent-Teacher* — now known as the *Illinois PTA Bulletin* — is the official publication of the Illinois PTA. First issued in 1917, its articles authored by state board members offers constant help to local units. Free copies were channeled to each association via its local unit president. School-connected clubs, known as Parent Teacher Associations, proved to be the most effective and in 1913, the state organization became the Illinois Congress of Mothers and Parent Teacher Associations (following a similar action by the national body in 1908). In 1919, the less cumbersome name of Illinois Council of Parent Teacher Associations was adopted, and in 1928, again following the national pattern, the state group took its present name. The Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers was incorporated in 1918, and the first local unit charters issued in 1921.

From 1914 to 1928, the organization's structure was changed several times. At one time, county councils were advocated as the ideal administrative unit, but city and county councils are now counseling bodies. The districts, set up in their present form in 1917 and now 20 in number, serve as the administrative unit between the State PTA and the local units. The Chicago Region, established in 1947, unites the four current Chicago districts for citywide work.

Early membership was on a club basis, member-clubs paying a maximum of \$10.00 annual dues until 1923, after which they paid per capita dues for their members. Membership was made individual in 1929, and now by paying dues to a local unit, a member automatically pays dues to both the Illinois and National PTAs of which the person is thus also a member.

Important developments in the twenties included the establishment of an endowment fund in 1922, with a minimum of \$25,000; the opening of the state office in 1926; pioneer work in radio; initiation of the summer roundup; and the state's first credit course in parent-teacher work, given at the Chicago Normal School in 1923. Parent-teacher programs have been given at 11 colleges and universities (credit work being done at Illinois State University).

The state and local units gave extensive civilian service during World War II and helped maintain school and community standards in a disrupted world.

In 1943 the Illinois PTA received special recognition from the National PTA for having more subscriptions to the PTA Magazine than any of the other forty-nine Congresses. For sixteen consecutive years we received the same recognition. At the 1958 National Convention, Illinois received a special award for having had the greatest increase in subscriptions for the PTA Magazine for five consecutive years.

In 1946 the Illinois PTA initiated a special program of leadership training for local unit parent education chairmen. A pilot project was co-sponsored by the Illinois PTA and University College, University of Chicago. The National PTA selected the Chicago Area Project as the pilot for its five-year Expanded Parent Education program.

From 1950 to the present, the Illinois PTA has maintained the highest standards in parent education and child advocacy work.

In 1964 Illinois received three special awards, for having the highest number of subscriptions, for having the largest increase in number of subscriptions, and for having the highest percentage of increase in subscriptions for states of our classification.

Courses and workshops are available to train PTA leaders, including *PTA Road to Success*, Council and President's Course plus the ABCs of PTA Finance and PTA and the Law Workshops. Annually many opportunities are available to attend workshops and conferences on every topic of interest to parents, teachers, and the public, including legislation, health, safety, working successfully with school/community partners and the welfare of children.

Publications are regularly made available to PTA members and local units. Written by informed members, these cover organizational areas, such as *The Answer Book*, *Helping Hands Program Guide*, *Council Handbook*, *Membership Marketing Guide*, *The Idea Book*, *Election Procedures*, *Legislation Platform*, *Impress the Press*, *Meet the Media*, *Nominating Committee*, *PTA/PTSA in Junior and Senior High Schools*, *Strikes, Protests, Work Stoppages and the PTA*, and *When Schools Close*. New materials are sent to the local unit president as they are developed.

An awards program for completing specific training courses, and attending conferences and conventions include a Gold Card, and beginning in 1999, a Platinum Card. Awards programs for completing specific training courses, attending conferences and conventions include the Gold Card and the Platinum Card.

Beginning in 1980 and continuing to the present, the Illinois PTA and its local units have participated in the National PTA's *Reflections* arts program, which provides awards for children's original work in the areas of visual arts, photography, music composition, and literature.

Advocacy continues to be one of the most important functions of the Illinois PTA, with resolutions being adopted annually at the state conventions. PTA Advocacy Days in Springfield give local unit members an opportunity to speak directly to their legislators on issues considered critical by the PTA. Legislative Conferences have been a feature in the 1990s. In 1996 and 1997, the Illinois PTA chaired a coalition of child advocacy groups that held Parent Marches on Springfield to urge adequate funding of education, and a revision of the state income tax laws to more equitably fund education. About 5,000 parents and other citizens attended each of these events.

The state office was moved from Chicago to 311 East Capitol Avenue, Springfield, on April 24, 1953. The 1954 convention voted to establish a State Headquarters Fund and in 1954 and 1955, \$25,000 was earmarked for this purpose. The 1959 convention approved the purchase of property at Spring and Canedy Streets, Springfield. The 1960 convention approved new headquarters plans. The headquarters building was dedicated at the 1962 convention on April 12. The office moved to the new headquarters building, 901 South Spring Street, on August 1, 1962. Open house was held on December 7, 8, and 9, 1962, for members and friends of the Illinois PTA. An additional piece of property on Canedy was purchased in the early 1990s to provide additional parking space. Since that time the office building has been maintained and renovated by the membership of the PTA, and continues to be used for all office functions as well as board meetings, and meetings of PTA cooperating organizations.

The Illinois PTA was host to the National PTA at its fiftieth anniversary convention in 1947, and again in 1955, 1964, and 2000.

The 100th anniversary commemorative sidewalk was dedicated on May 30, 2000 – Illinois PTA's 100th birthday.

At the 2007 Annual Convention the structure of the executive committee was changed. Bylaws changes reduced the officers from seven to six, with the most notable change being the position of president-elect. This was the last year that delegates elected the president. The make-up of the state board of managers was also refined, reducing the number of voting members of the board.

In May 2009, the State PTA Office was moved from its current location to 808 South Second Street in Springfield.

Our 108-year history is filled with many wonderful accomplishments and continuing battles. One of those continuing battles is adequate school funding. The Take Action page of this web site will keep you updated on all legislative activities including *Calls to Action* and Legislative Alerts.

The Illinois PTA works with and serves on many committees on the Illinois State Board of Education; cooperating agencies in the fields of health, safety, environmental concerns, juvenile protection, cultural arts, community outreach; and other governmental bodies.

With a membership of 150,000 members the Illinois PTA is a strong voice for the advocacy of children and youth.

If you are interested in receiving additional information on PTA or forming a PTA in your school or community please call the Illinois PTA state office at (800) 877-9617 today.