

10 Ways to Get Fathers and Men More Involved in Schools



How can we get more men involved? National PTA surveyed nearly 2,700 men in fall 2004 to find out. The findings from that survey have been distilled to 10 ways a local PTA can break down barriers to male involvement and increase male PTA membership and engagement in the education of their children.

1. Make the membership pitch relevant to males.

The number one reason why survey respondents joined PTA was "to work to improve the school for the benefit of my child/children." Therefore, your recruitment materials and your membership pitch should explain how men's involvement in PTA would benefit their children and their children's schools. A dad's involvement in PTA:

- Shows added interest in his child's education and school activities;
- Shows greater support for his child's teachers and school; and
- Improves relationships between parents and school personnel.

2. Use specific messaging and advertising aimed at men.

When asked what would encourage men to join parent groups, men most frequently answered male oriented advertising. Eighty-seven percent of the men surveyed believe that parents groups value men, but 67 percent don't believe PTA does a good job promoting male involvement. Be sure to show men's involvement in your school in your communications to families. Reach out to fathers, grandfathers, uncles, other significant males in the lives of the students.

3. Just ask them.

Nearly half of the men who responded to the survey said men don't join parent groups because they aren't asked. Just asking could pay big dividends in involvement of fathers and men. Are opportunities to be involved of interest to fathers, grandfathers and uncles

4. Ask the women in your parent groups to invite the men in their children's lives to join in.

Research reveals that women can influence men to join PTA. More than 90 percent of male PTA members indicated in the survey that their spouses, who were already members, contributed largely to their involvement in schools.

5. Create more volunteer opportunities and special events for dads.

Survey respondents stated a preference for hands-on projects and suggested events such as "dads only" events, school carnivals, sports activities, father-daughter and father-son activities, and back-to-school fests.

6. Emphasize that becoming involved doesn't necessarily involve a large time commitment.

Seventy-one percent of the males surveyed indicated that "time" is a barrier to male involvement in PTA. It doesn't have to be, though. When talking about time, they were referring to the time necessary to volunteer. Assure new members that membership is not synonymous with volunteering. Keep this in mind: If they join, they may eventually become volunteers; but if they never become members, they'll never become volunteers.

7. Give it to 'em straight.

Almost half of the men surveyed indicated that they want volunteer roles and expectations clearly defined. Telling them the what, when, where, why, and how would make them more likely to join and to volunteer.

8. Communicate with men the way they want to be reached.

Men want fewer meetings, and they want meetings to be at more convenient times, such as after work. In addition, men want meetings to have a clear agenda and be results-oriented, rather than exploratory sessions on an issue or topic. Men prefer to receive PTA communications in bulleted lists, as summary points, in e-mails, or as quick bits of information in newsletters.

9. Seek male members in the community.

Instead of waiting for men to come to your school, reach-out to where men often meet. Present the volunteer opportunities message at local service clubs that have a large male contingent, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions clubs. If men see that other club members support the school, they might be more likely to join.

10. Recognize and celebrate members.

Publicize your successes. When you start getting more men involved in your school and parent groups, let the community know. Success begets success. Reinforcing men's contributions, while being mindful of what all members do for PTA, creates a positive atmosphere. Recognize members, thank them often, and celebrate your accomplishments and success.

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Management Engagement Toolkit

With the increased involvement of men—single fathers, non-resident dads, homeschooling dads, custodial grandparents and other concerned relatives—in their student's education, there is a greater need for male parent support.

This toolkit provides resources to develop strong male engagement and support in schools and PTAs. It also includes information from National PTA's [MORE Alliance](#) (Men Organized to Raise Engagement).

- [PTA MORE Alliance](#)
- [8 Steps to a Successful Male Engagement Program](#)
- [Sample Action Plan: Male Engagement Program Development](#)
- [Male Engagement Event and Program Planning Guide](#)
- [Father-Friendly PTA and School Survey](#)
- [Involved Dads: An Interview with Jeff Kirk, Colorado PTA](#)
- [The Men of Action Network Interview](#)

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