

February 12, 2007

### PTA ADVOCACY WEEK

February 19-23, 2007

*A time to speak up for children and education*

PTA is the nation's largest volunteer child advocacy organization. To continue its 110 years of service to children, PTA is holding its first annual PTA Advocacy Week February 19-23, 2007, to help local units and members learn to become strong and effective voices for children. During this week local, district and state PTA leaders and members will contact their members of Congress, who will be in their home districts that week; other elected officials; and other important decision-makers to talk about PTA and PTA issues. PTA Advocacy Week can be a great time to kick off a year-round advocacy campaign to support a specific goal, such as increasing arts in education.

Or your PTA may simply want to invite school board members to a PTA meeting to hear parents' concerns.

Anyone can plan or get involved in an Advocacy Week event. [Useful tips and tools](#) on how to be an effective advocate can be found on the PTA website at: <http://pta.org/advocacy/>

Use these tips to plan your local activities.

Let PTA know what advocacy events your PTA is holding by [filling out this easy survey](#):

<http://www.zoomerang.com/recipient/survey-intro.zgi?p=WEB2263WRZ2TMW>

*"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do." - Helen Keller, American author/lecturer (1880-1968)*

- from the National PTA website at [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

Advocacy concepts are explained in the free PTA e-learning course, "How To Be an Effective Advocate for Your Child". Take this course at your own convenience at:

[http://www.pta.org/local\\_leader/elearning/course/homepage.cfm.htm](http://www.pta.org/local_leader/elearning/course/homepage.cfm.htm)

You will need the Username and Password from your PTA membership card to take the e-learning course.

### PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY ADDED TO ANTI-BULLYING BILL

An Anti-Bullying and Harassment bill (SF61) that was passed by the Senate has been approved by the House, but with amendments. So the bill has been sent back to the Senate so they may consider the amendments.

A parent involvement policy was added to the anti-bullying bill requiring school boards to have a policy that:

1. Ensures that communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
2. Promotes and supports parenting skills.
3. Recognizes and supports the integral role parents and guardians play in assisting student learning.
4. Welcomes parents and guardians into the school and seeks their support and assistance.
5. Makes parents and guardians participants in the decisions that affect children and families.
6. Utilizes community collaborations productively to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Iowa PTA supports the anti-bullying bill and the comprehensive statewide parent involvement policy.

### FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS

For several years, Iowa PTA has advocated for 6 percent allowable growth for schools. Governor Culver proposed, and the Senate has approved, 4 percent allowable growth for the 2008-09 school year. The 4 percent increase would raise the cost per pupil by \$213 to \$5,546. Iowa PTA continues to encourage legislators to fund 6 percent allowable growth.

In addition to the allowable growth increase, the Governor and some legislators have promised to add funding for specific areas such as teacher pay and early childhood education.

For more information about education funding, visit Pride and Promise of Iowa Public Schools at: [http://www.myiowaschools.org/iowa\\_education\\_funding.asp](http://www.myiowaschools.org/iowa_education_funding.asp)

## KEG REGISTRATION

Iowa PTA has again joined with students and child safety advocates in support of legislation requiring all beer kegs to be tagged so that the buyer can be identified. This would make it easier to prosecute adults who provide alcohol to minors. Twenty-three counties currently have keg registration ordinances, but statewide legislation will help ensure the safety of all our youth.

To read the keg registration bill (HF56), go to:  
<http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&hbill=HF56>

## PEST MANAGEMENT PLANS

This bill requires school districts to adopt an integrated pest management plan and requires that they notify parents about pesticide applications in the school and on the school grounds. An integrated pest management plan is a method of weed and pest control using a variety of techniques that minimize the need for herbicides and insecticides.

Iowa PTA advocates for integrated pest management plans because they are safer and more cost effective than traditional pesticide programs. Iowa PTA also supports the parental notification provisions in this legislation. To read this bill, go to:  
<http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&hbill=HF128>

## SCHOOL REFORM AND CURRICULUM

A number of bills have been introduced that pertain to school reform and curriculum. At this point, Iowa PTA is monitoring bills that address such things as:

- A statewide study of K-12 education in Iowa to determine strategies for improving student achievement and reducing achievement gaps.
- Development of state standards for content and performance.
- A student promotion policy.
- A study regarding the development of a statewide student information system.
- A required course in personal finance literacy.
- Raising the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18.
- Requiring dental screening for initial enrollment in an Iowa school.
- High school reform initiatives.

## CONTACTING LAWMAKERS

### WRITING TO YOUR LEGISLATORS

During the legislative session, address mail to Iowa Legislators at:

The Honorable (full name of legislator)  
Iowa House of Representatives (or Iowa Senate)  
State Capitol  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Use the correct salutation:

Dear Representative (last name),  
Or  
Dear Senator (last name),

### CALLING YOUR LEGISLATORS

Leave a message for your Representative in the House by calling (515) 281-3221

Leave a message for your Senator by calling (515) 281-3371

### E-MAILING YOUR LEGISLATORS

You MUST include your home address in your email, so they know you are a constituent!

Email addresses are created as follows:

[firstname.lastname@legis.state.ia.us](mailto:firstname.lastname@legis.state.ia.us)

### DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR LEGISLATORS ARE?

Go to: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/FindLeg/>

### TIPS ON COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS:

[http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Advocating\\_to\\_Lawmakers.pdf](http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Advocating_to_Lawmakers.pdf)

### ADVOCACY GUIDELINES FOR PTAs:

[http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Guidelines\\_for\\_Advocating.pdf](http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Guidelines_for_Advocating.pdf)

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To get a FREE advocacy workshop for your PTA, contact the Iowa PTA office:

[ia\\_office@pta.org](mailto:ia_office@pta.org)  
(515) 225-4197  
(800) 475-4782

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Thanks to everyone who participated in Iowa PTA's issue survey last month. The report is included in the .pdf version of this legislative update.

## Results of 2006-2007 Issue Survey

Iowa PTA advocates for children at the local, state and national level. In January 2007, members of the Iowa PTA Legislative Network were surveyed in order to gauge the importance they attribute to various issues that affect children, families and schools. The Legislative Network is made up of a variety of individuals including PTA members, parents, community members, teachers and administrators.

Twenty-seven (27) questionnaires were returned. The results are reported below as a percentage of the total responses:

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Not at all important</i>	<i>Somewhat important</i>	<i>Very important</i>	<i>Extremely important</i>
Afterschool programs			22%	44%	33%
Bullying			26%	33%	41%
Early childhood education			7%	26%	67%
Increased pay for teachers		11%	11%	33%	44%
Increased funding for schools		4%	7%	22%	67%
Nutritious school foods			26%	41%	33%

### Comments

#### **Bullying:**

As far as bullying is concerned, we have an obligation to make our schools a safe learning environment, free of thugs and gangs. In order to make this a reality we must first start by taking a strong stance and begin the process of criminal charges for assaults that occur in the schools and on school grounds, just as they would be outside of the school environment. The 3 day suspension does very little, in most cases, to deter future aggressive activities by certain individuals, so stronger measures are required to put an end to it. Our schools are not designed to become a haven for thugs and gangs, who refuse to take the education process seriously, and they are slowly decaying because of the extra efforts by Educators acting as police officers and anger management councilors. Every student has the right to a good education, and it is up to the individual whether they utilize that right in a positive fashion. For those that have made the conscious decision to break the rules and have threatened students and faculty members of any school, they have the right to have criminal charges brought upon them and removed from the system all together. The good of the many outweighs that of the few. Strong words laid out several decades ago while forming this great Republic, which still hold true today.

#### **Increased teacher pay:**

I really do believe that increased teacher pay has to be based on SOME kind of merit plan. Unfortunately there are a number of teachers in the classroom that just "fill the space" and do just what is necessary to keep their 9 month job. These kind of teachers should not get the same pay as the teacher who is really dedicated to their job. I have suggested that an overall evaluation be done, (NOT testing in specific areas) and merit pay be based on percentage of improvement. This would be a difficult tool to develop, but would accurately identify teachers worthy of the most increase in pay. An advanced degree does not always make a better teacher, and pay should not be solely based on this.

With three family members as teachers, I surely don't want them to starve, but we only need to raise teacher salary to be competitive. And even that's questionable due to Iowa's pleasant environment. Don't get me wrong, a few of my friends in the DMPS system have horrible classes, but nothing like my sister faced in Omaha (where the average tenure was 2 years). So of course that school has to pay more, because the kids are hellions and completely without discipline. Counter that experience with a rural Iowa school, and the difference is as plain as day. My point is there should be comparable pay in comparable situations.

Increased pay for teachers is somewhat important if they have kept up to date with new ideas, further education.

#### **Increased funding for schools:**

If the Legislature would fund non-funded mandated programs it would be a start. It has been proven around the nation that pumping more money into schools does not always improve student achievement. Community Involvement and confidence in the school system is more often the recipe for academic excellence.

Every year we encounter the same problems: not enough money. But when funding is increased, it's never enough. It's like it gets caught up in administration or additional office staff. Sometimes it goes to the teachers or the teachers' unions.

I am all for local increased school funding but I do not believe the State and Federal Governments should increase funding. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that the Government does not know what they are doing in public education. I strongly believe that local school boards should make the decisions about teaching the children they are responsible for.

#### **Nutritious school foods:**

I think trans fats should be removed from school foods. Right now. Trans fats have no place in our schools, fattening our kids. Some cities have banned them, yet they can still be found in our schools. As we battle childhood obesity, we should be getting rid of the snakes, not treating the snake bites.

We have a great school nutrition program.

Nutritious school foods are extremely important. Give the kids more... they are hungry.

#### **General comments:**

All these issues are really important to me and I don't know how to press for them all.

I feel that all of the topics above are very important in providing a quality education for our young people.

It is very important to me to get the Parents involved again in parenting and our Educators focused on educating. Early communication with parents is a key to solving problems that arise in classrooms that involve their students, so they are given the opportunity to deal with it before it becomes a huge issue. If parents refuse to become involved with the discipline activity of their child then it should fall back onto the Principal to take care of as he or she sees fit without fear of repercussions from those uninvolved parents.