

# POSITION STATEMENT

## Advancing Equity & Diversity



For more than 120 years, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has worked toward bettering the lives of every child in education, health and safety. Equity and diversity have been central to the values and beliefs of the National PTA from the time of its founding to its merger with the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers in 1970 to present day.

The Virginia PTA has long-standing commitments to the principles of anti-discrimination and anti-racism and we value and appreciate the diversity which enriches and strengthens the structure of our society within our state and nation.

Celebrating the diversity of views, experiences, cultural heritages and traditions, skills and abilities, values, and preferences that make up our communities is at the core of our work. PTA Officers are actively engaged, daily, in the ground work within each school building of fostering an inclusive and diverse school climate.

It is important to acknowledge and advance work with community partners to address structural inequities that are rooted in our nation's social, political, economic, and educational structures.

Virginia PTA urges its members at all levels to monitor, support, and advocate for programs and policies that embrace diversity and inclusivity as strengths and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities.

**Student Achievement:** Virginia PTA supports programs that reduce student academic achievement gaps and that expand opportunities for minority students, who are historically under-represented, to participate in advanced or gifted programs and courses.

**Staff Training:** Virginia PTA supports educators, support staff and administrative staff participating in ongoing, mandatory training and professional development programs that seek to recognize student strengths and skills and reinforce appreciation for cultural differences for the purpose of reducing unconscious bias.

**Workforce Diversity:** Virginia PTA supports expanded teacher recruitment and mentoring programs that seek to promote diversity of educators and staff.

**Curriculum Review & Media:** Virginia PTA urges the Virginia Board of Education and local School Boards to review history text books and curriculum at every grade level, but in particular the fourth grade Virginia history curriculum, to eliminate language, behavior or retelling of events that is stereotypical, demeaning, exclusionary, or judgmental and instead embrace cultural contexts with appreciation and celebration of cultures and their contributions to our society.

**Library/Media Review:** Virginia PTA encourages local school divisions to undertake a review of the reading materials in school libraries to ensure all students see themselves and their experiences in the books they are exposed to and that books reinforce the message that diverse interests and backgrounds make our country special and strong.

**Discipline Disproportionality.** Virginia PTA supports school discipline practices that seek to address a student's situational and behavioral motivation and prevent future disciplinary incidents in a positive way that keeps children in school and learning over exclusionary discipline policies (such as suspension and expulsion). Virginia PTA supports initiatives that address racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequities in the juvenile justice system and in the referrals for discipline.

**Equity Committees:** Virginia PTA supports the creation of Equity and Cultural Responsiveness Committees and Chief Equity Officers within each School Division to support implementation of culturally responsive practices across the school division. This may include monitoring completion of cultural competence professional development, reviewing lesson plans and curriculum, assessing cultural necessities, decreasing discipline disproportionality and closing opportunity gaps. We also encourage schools to develop their own equity teams and encourage PTA's to designate a member of their PTA to participate in county-wide equity committees.

**Translation & Access:** Virginia PTA encourages school divisions to provide translation of student performance documents and school communications to foster transparency and parent participation and be mindful that not every family has access to technology to support electronic communication or receipt of student data.

**Data Transparency:** The Virginia PTA urges the Virginia Board of Education to include information about teacher ethnicity and racial diversity on the School Quality Profile for each school and indicate, languages spoken by staff and whether or not teachers and building staff have completed cultural sensitivity training.

Virginia PTA reminds its PTAs to:

- Openly assess beliefs and practices to assure inclusiveness and guard against discrimination;
- Make every effort to create a PTA board and membership that is inclusive and reflective of its community;
- Foster programs, events and practices that eliminate bias, prejudice and misunderstanding within their communities and celebrate cultural diversity;
- Actively participate in parent education programs run by your school division which are designed to welcome immigrant families in each school community.

April 27, 2019: Adopted by the Virginia PTA Board of Directors

Virginia PTA Position Statements are official documents outlining the opinion, will, or intent of the association to address statewide problems, situations, or concerns that affect children and youth and require statewide or national action to seek resolution on the issue.