

## CCPTA Fundraising Guidance for School PTAs August 2021

As PTAs and school leaders make plans for the 2021-22 school year, the CCPTA executive board is offering some reminders and points to consider when fundraising from families in your school community.

We recognize that school PTAs are separate organizations from the CCPTA and your activities, including fundraising, are governed by your bylaws and by relevant state and federal laws.

That said, we encourage you to consider the following points, noting especially those things that are prescribed, prohibited or recommended in School Board Policy [D-15](#) “External Funding” and relevant position statements from the National and Virginia PTA organizations.

1. **Special recognition of families or students that is tied to donations:** School Board policy D-15 prohibits fundraising that “include[s] techniques likely to embarrass students who do not participate” or that “appeal unreasonably to their self-esteem, sympathy, need to belong, or other emotions or feelings.” Examples of this can include:
  - Students’ names are displayed in a prominent way at the school based on a family donation.
  - The size of a family’s donation triggers different ways of recognizing or rewarding the student with special opportunities.

This type of fundraising calls attention to income inequality within school communities and can work against the goal of inclusion.

*Consider instead:*

- Whole-school or grade-level fundraising goals that showcase collective contribution (e.g., a thermometer-style display)
- Whole-school or grade-level recognitions and celebrations.

2. **“Exclusives” with school staff.** Many schools have a tradition of auctioning off special experiences like “Principal for a Day” or “Pizza Party with the Art Teachers.” While there’s nothing in policy or bylaws that forbids this kind of fundraising, we ask you to consider how lower-income students and families might experience this, and whether “pay-to-play” interactions with students and families could create an environment that fosters unconscious bias among school staff.

*Consider instead:*

- A raffle in which every student is automatically entered, and students and families have the opportunity to purchase extra chances to win in a low-cost way (e.g., 50 cents per ticket).
- Grade-level or class-level fundraising that enables every member of that group to participate in the special experience with school staff if the collective goal is reached.

**3. PTA fundraising at the request of school staff.** PTAs are independent organizations. While it's great to solicit feedback from school staff about your fundraising plans, you shouldn't be raising money for specific things (or for a principal's discretionary fund) simply because your principal or another school staff member has urged you to do so. It's important for school and PTA leaders to acknowledge there is a power dynamic at play and be aware of potentially problematic situations like this one:

- A principal really wants the PTA to fund four teachers to attend a conference in another state. Because it would greatly diminish the funding the PTA has set aside for educator grants, the PTA wants to refuse. However, the PTA leaders also don't want to upset staff members who are interacting daily with their children, one of whom already has a challenging relationship with two of his teachers.

*Consider instead:*

- A meeting with school leaders before you establish your PTA budget so that you can hear their ideas for the upcoming school year and then explore which ideas align with your own.
- Aligning your PTA activities with your school's annual School Improvement Plan, with input from (but not directed by) your school leaders.

School PTA leaders who are feeling pressure from their school's leadership to fundraise for specific things or in certain ways are encouraged to reach out to the CCPTA's executive board for a confidential sounding board and problem-solving help. (See also "[Is Your PTA an ATM for Your School?](#)" from the National PTA.)

**4. Items or services donated to your school.** There are rules in place that dictate what types of goods and services PTAs can donate to their schools, as well as the levels of approval required for schools to accept these gifts (see "Gifts to Schools" and "Private Funding for Building and Grounds Improvements" in [Policy D-15](#)). It's also important to talk with your school leaders to determine if the school staff would welcome and can maintain the items or services you want to donate. Finally, we encourage school PTA leaders to consider how these donations may contribute to inequities across schools in APS.

**5. The purpose of your PTA.** The National PTA's mission is "to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children." We encourage your PTA to reflect on its activities and consider:

- How are we engaging and empowering our families with the knowledge and skills they need to advocate for their children?
- Are there families we're not reaching? Do we understand why, and if not, how could we find out? What could we change to become more inclusive?
- What does the word "advocate" mean to us? In what ways are we advocating for all children? Does the term "all children" mean all children in this school, all children in APS, or both?

We welcome any questions you have about this document and are happy to facilitate discussion about PTA fundraising at one of our upcoming General Membership meetings or in another forum. Thank you for your service to the PTA and our students.