

PTA Pretzels: Embracing New Diversity

PTA leaders share a long tradition of being “PTA Flexible” in the face of the unexpected. Today, however, PTAs face huge challenges and looming uncertainties. “PTA Flexible” attitudes must twist like pretzels to pursue the PTA mission.

What better representation of what PTA leaders must do than the humble pretzel? This 1,500 year old snack is said to be twisted into embracing arms. Social distancing has created a new type of diversity in our society — the virtual vs the face-to-face. Reach out and embrace both virtual and face-to-face families and bring them together in your PTA.

As you strive to meet your community’s needs, remember that . . .

Students and families attending your school by non-traditional means are still YOUR students and families. Invite them to join your PTA. MemberHub is a great tool to reach families that are not available in the brick-and-mortar setting. Ask your administration to forward an e-mail invitation to join the PTA. Include a link to purchase membership in your MemberHub store.

PTA members do not need to have students enrolled in brick-and-mortar classes to serve as PTA officers or committee chairs. In fact, PTA members do not even need to have a student enrolled at your school to serve on your PTA’s board. Perhaps a family has chosen learning at home with Florida Virtual School for this year. That dedicated PTA parent has made the best choice for their family — but they can continue to fully contribute to your PTA.

To accommodate social distancing, many PTAs have moved to virtual meetings as permitted by the revised bylaws for Florida PTAs. Your officers, your board, and your general members can all meet virtually. Your PTA may elect officers, approve its budget, update bylaws, and conduct any other necessary business virtually.

Voting, either for elections or on motions, may take place virtually. If you are offering a blended meeting with both in-person and virtual access, ALL participants are eligible to vote. Many PTAs have seen increased participation on virtual platforms. This increased engagement is a positive outcome of current challenges.

As this year continues, be PTA flexible and become that PTA pretzel — embracing both the virtual and face-to-face families in one PTA family for all Florida’s children.