



Name **Linda Kearschner**

What is your current role with PTA? **Florida PTA President**

What was your first PTA volunteer position? **Programs Committee Member at Azalea Elementary School, St. Petersburg, FL when my daughter was in kindergarten (19 years ago).**

What was the most challenging obstacle that you encountered on the path to your current role? **I have always found more opportunities, than obstacles on my path. I will say that in PTA we sometimes try to be everything to everyone. We can very easily overload ourselves and those around us. Learning to say “no” or “not right now” can be tough.**

How did you overcome this obstacle? **Prioritizing what is most important (a clean house is at the bottom of my list – always), accepting that I can’t do it all myself, and understanding that the results will be much better when it is a team effort. Trusting and empowering the team is essential.**

Describe your happiest moment as a PTA leader. **I couldn’t possibly name just one. However, I can say that my happiest moments are when I hear from parents, students, educators and community members about how our PTA “voice” gave them the knowledge, strength, or courage to take action and make change happen. There are so many great “Mission Moments” happening across our state and I hope our members will continue to share these so that others in our PTA family might learn from them.**

What advice would you offer to a budding leader? **Follow and share your passions, but don’t be afraid to try something new – a new position, a new program, a new idea. Becoming a leader doesn’t always mean moving to a more senior position. Great leaders know there are always ways to contribute even if you aren’t at the front. You can also lead from behind or side-by-side. Great leaders are great partners.**

What advice would you offer to a PTA leader seeking to attain your current position? **To be President you need to first be a great student and a great team member. Recognize and appreciate the talents of all those you encounter along the way. Learn from them and then pass that knowledge along. PTA is not a “one-person sport”. Understand that “your way” doesn’t have to be “the way”. Share your journey with others, but encourage them to seek their own path. To be truly successful it is imperative that you keep an open mind and an open heart.**

Looking back to the beginning of your PTA leadership journey, if you were given the opportunity, is there anything that you would do differently, and if so please elaborate. I began my leadership journey in schools where there were large, exceptionally strong, high-functioning PTAs. It wasn't until I reached the council level that I realized that many PTAs struggle – struggle with membership, struggle to find ways to support meaningful parent engagement, struggle to find their voice. That isn't because their parents and school communities have any less desire to support their children. Whatever the obstacles, we know that many PTAs have challenges. If I could turn back time, I would have encouraged my PTA to look beyond our school and to seek out ways to collaborate and support others in our PTA family and in the community that could benefit from our servant leadership.

What's next for you? I know I will always be involved in PTA somehow, some way. I am a “lifer”. As the Immediate Past President of the Florida PTA, there are a few assigned responsibilities including serving as the President of the Sunshine State PTA, our state-wide, at-large local unit. Beyond that I am not sure. However, whatever the future holds, I will always remain committed to this amazing advocacy association, because what we do for children and families really does matter.

Which of the figures below best reflects your leadership path, Figure A or Figure B? Please feel free to explain. My leadership path has had elements of both. I did follow the local unit to council to state leadership steps, but within each of those levels my path was less traditional and more eclectic. I spent a lot of time in advocacy related and leadership development roles along the way. Unlike the vast majority of my predecessors, I was not a Council President. Whatever your path, as long as it keeps you engaged in PTA and supporting children, then it is the right one for you and for the Association.



Figure A

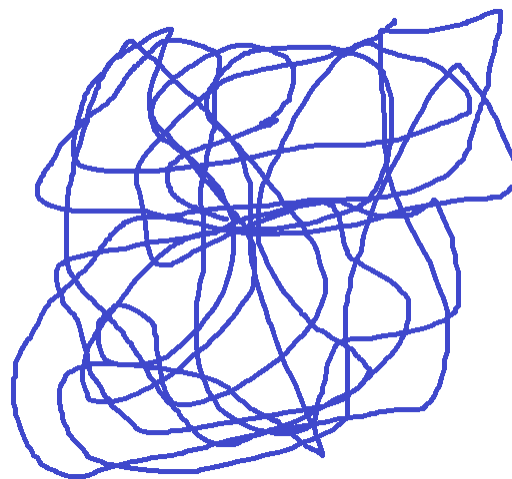


Figure B