

Transformative Engagement Helps to Fulfill the PTA Mission

By: Alvin Gainey, FL PTA Secretary

PTA volunteers far and wide usually galvanize around the subject of recruiting and engaging new volunteers. When asked why volunteers are needed, the answer usually involves a project or event. Of course, having ample volunteers for events is always a delight because we all know the idiom “Many hands make light work,” but how are volunteers kept engaged outside of set building and concession sales? Far too often, volunteers are solicited and not engaged until the next festival, dance or movie night has been announced on a school’s calendar.

To better engage and sustain the involvement of volunteers, successful PTAs have focused on engagement that is by and large ***inclusive, individualized, integrated and impactful*** – the four “I”s of Transformative Family Engagement. Being ***inclusive*** helps all families know that their perspective matters. Buy-in comes when an ***individualized*** approach is taken to sharing information; every parent should leave a PTA meeting understanding how information presented is helpful to their family. Thinking outside the box, going beyond one-time encounters and aligning PTA efforts to support learning that is happening in the classroom is the secret sauce of an ***integrated*** approach of engaging families. Measuring family engagement can be complex, but understanding that even the smallest outcomes are ***impactful*** to parents and families, which will empower them to support their student’s success.

For example, Blue Ridge Elementary School parents have long-desired STEM and STEAM curriculum. For all intents and purposes, the parent’s requests have fallen upon deaf ears, as funding usually dominates the discourse. Blue Ridge’s PTA is relatively small, but the volunteer leaders have come up with ideas to bridge the gap between parents, school administration and the local school board. The PTA hosts a STEM Night, using the resources provided by [National PTA](#) – families, teachers, administrators and the local school board member are invited. While students visit the different stations in the STEM gallery, a small information session is held for parents and teachers which highlight how introducing STEM into the curriculum will benefit students. The administration has an opportunity to share their excitement about STEM curriculum and group also discusses their plans to be present at the upcoming school board meeting. In this example, the PTA was ***inclusive*** by inviting all families to strategize and streamline their efforts concerning a matter that was as much global as it was ***individualized***. By involving teachers, administrators and the school board member, the efforts of the PTA were ***integrated*** and will undoubtedly be ***impactful*** to all involved.

How, in such an example did this further the mission of PTA? Well, instead of soliciting volunteers for an event, the PTA engaged families to get involved surrounding an issue that empowered them to advocate for their children’s education needs. Doing so went well beyond the idea of ‘getting volunteers involved’ – they trained advocates who will in turn remain involved and vested in the work of PTA and the success of their children and community.

For resources on Transformative Family Engagement, [click here](#)!