

Sutterville PTA

Summary of 2005 Teacher and Parent Surveys

About the Surveys

The Teacher Survey was administered in the March 2005; there were a number of flaws in both the survey and the manner it was administered which compromised the results. In addition, there was a poor response rate for the Teacher Survey. The Teacher Survey did not parallel the Parent Survey administered at Open House in May 2005 making it difficult to relate the findings to each other. The Parent Survey had minor flaws that should be corrected before another is administered.

For the purposes of planning for the 2005-06 school year, the PTA is using the Parent Survey as the foundation of its decision making and weaving in the results and comments of teachers as best it can to augment its funding priorities for the year. It is highly suggested that a new Teacher Survey be administered in the near future. The Teacher Survey should parallel a revised Parent Survey to the extent possible.

For the purposes of this analysis, teacher responses were characterized in one of the following ways:

- Highly important
- Moderately important
- Less important

The Sutterville PTA has made a great start in gathering input from teachers and parents; however, the PTA remains committed to improving its information gathering for planning and budgeting purposes. It is recommended the PTA administer Teacher and Parent Surveys every other year to refine its work plan and budget. In addition, other input should be gathered for specific projects such as a Teacher Technology Needs Survey which will assist the PTA in breaking down a large issue into smaller, manageable projects for funding.

About Fundraising

(Note: the Teacher Survey did not ask questions regarding fundraising.)

Over two-thirds (68%) of **parents** felt the PTA held “**just the right amount**” of fundraisers during the year.

The following were the top 5 (out of 20) fundraisers parents reported participating in:

- Raleys (55%)
- Stampede (54%)
- Direct Donation (50%)
- School Cents (42%)
- Labels/Boxtops for Education (41%)

Compare this list with the top 5 fundraisers from last year (percentage indicates parent participation rate):

- Sutterville Stampede (\$7,800) (54%)
- Cookie/Pizza Dough Sale (\$4,800) (36%)
- Innisbrook Gift Wrap (\$4,750) (21%)
- Direct Donation (\$4,500) (50%)
- Raley's Quality of Life Card (\$3,300) (55%)

Suggested board action:

- Stay the course on the number of fundraisers.
- Resist the temptation to add more fundraisers; consider replacing fundraisers that don't raise much money and/or require lots of volunteers with fundraisers that do the opposite.
- Recognize that parents give in different ways and keep a variety of fundraisers "in the mix."
- Eliminate or quit promoting some of the less effective/time consuming fundraisers (some of these fundraisers can be picked up by classes or interested parents but don't need to be PTA sponsored).
- Remember that perception is everything; if parents feel they are constantly being hit up for money, they will grow weary of the PTA asking over and over again.
- Spread fundraising out throughout the year.

Events

The following were reported as the top 4 (out of 8) events parents attended:

- Evening assemblies (69%) (teachers viewed these as moderately important)
- Fall Festival (62%)
- Field trips (55%) (see "field trip" section below for teacher input)
- Meet and Greet Coffee (50%) (teachers viewed this as moderately important)

These are in addition to Back-to-School Night and Open House, which are both school sponsored (and not included on our survey; it is suggested that these two events be included on future surveys).

Suggested board action:

- Continue to provide evening assemblies for students and families; make sure PTA is visible at these events.
- Continue to invest time and resources into producing the Fall Festival.
- Continue the coffee as a social event for parents, an opportunity to recruit volunteers for PTA events, and as a way to connect the PTA board with parents.
- Provide programming or support that enables and encourages parents to attend Back-to-School Night and Open House.
- Design a spring or end-of the year event that provides a social opportunity for parents and students.
- To the extent possible, combine several elements to strengthen events and increase attendance (example: Art Night, with Art Ark, with holiday concert of band, orchestra and choir).

Enrichment Activities

Parents indicated the following as the top 6 (out of 12) kinds of activities the PTA should support (these were ranked on a scale of 1 through 12 with 12 being the most important; points were totaled; points shown are sums of all points each item received):

- Fine arts (724 points) (teachers viewed specific PTA-sponsored art activities as either moderately or less important)
- Teacher support (680 points) (teachers viewed this as highly important)
- Library (678 points) (teachers viewed this as highly important)
- Technology (651 points) (teachers not asked about this)
- Performing Arts (651 points) (teachers viewed specific PTA-sponsored performing arts as moderately or less important)
- Science (626 points)

Regarding assemblies specifically, teachers expressed assemblies emphasize the following top 3 (out of 8) areas:

- Social behaviors (this was the 7th most popular answer of parents)
- Storytelling (not specifically asked on parent survey but related to language arts which was on the low side of parent priorities)
- Performing arts (see above)

Parents overwhelmingly (77%) preferred the PTA support enrichment that exposes students to new ideas and concepts rather than be curriculum related (16%).

Most parents (54%) felt enrichment should occur during the day. Many (32%) felt there should be after-school opportunities. There was little interest in before school enrichment.

Suggested board action:

- Continue to support, strengthen and diversify fine and performing arts through the arts and assemblies program; work closely with teachers to refine offerings as the teacher survey indicated strong support for performing arts assemblies but not strong support for some of the offerings).
- Increase the amount of funds provided for teacher supplies (also see technology bullet below)
- Decide how the PTA should support the library in the future.
- Conduct a technology survey to ascertain tech needs of teachers and staff; priority for investing in technology should be measured by how it benefits students.
- Invest in science; Mrs. Shada has outlined some needs for this year such as software or science programs on DVD; continue Science Night and assemblies related to science; support field trips that relate to science; offer after-school science club and fund scholarships to ensure broad participation; continue to explore this and build over the years.
- Offer and promote to parents more after school activities.

Field Trips

In the Teacher Survey of PTA events, field trip scholarships rated 2 (out of 25 events) in terms of teacher support.

Most parents (57%) felt that no more than 4 field trips should be offered per class per year. Some parents (32%) supported 5 or more trips.

The majority of parents (39%) felt a field trip should not cost more than \$10; many parents (28%) felt a field trip should cost no more than \$25. The parent comments were particularly interesting and drew a distinction between primary and secondary. Judging from the number of comments, parents strongly supported the secondary grade-level, longer, more expensive trips (specifically Coloma, Marin Headlands, and Sly Park).

Teachers indicated a strong desire to see the PTA support the more expensive field trips so all students could attend.

Suggested board action:

- The number of field trips scheduled is teacher driven; make sure teachers are aware of these results.
- Offer field trips scholarships for both Coloma and Marin; re-authorize Sly Park funds; let teachers know they can come to the PTA if they need funds for other field trips and that they can use their teacher supply funds for this purpose if they wish.

PTA Meetings

Parents (61%) strongly stated they preferred not to attend PTA meetings.

Of those who expressed interest in attending meetings, Tuesdays and Wednesdays were the most popular days to schedule a meeting; 6:00 pm was the approximate time parents reported they would be willing to attend a meeting.

Suggested board action:

- Let go of the expectation that lots of parents will come to all PTA meetings.
- Focus on two to three general meetings each year and give parents a reason to attend (Fall Festival planning, report cards, test scores, parent education).
- Schedule PTA general meetings on either Tuesday or Wednesdays with a start time of approximately 6:00 pm.

Communication

Parents are receiving information in a variety of ways. Parents reported receiving information as follows (they were allowed to pick as many as they used):

- Slate (90%)
- Weekly family newsletter (84%)
- Posters/signs (70%)
- Class newsletters (65%)

- Marquee (57%)
- Bulletin board (28%)
- Yahoo groups (14%)

Suggested board action:

- Recognize that parents receive information in many ways and continue to provide information through a variety of channels.
- Continue publishing the Slate and contributing PTA news to the Weekly Family newsletter.
- Consider using the Slate as a marketing tool (highlighting what the PTA has accomplished) and the Family newsletter for time sensitive information.
- Establish an email group with teachers as a way of asking them to include PTA news in their class newsletters.
- Continue using the marquee and consider updating the technology (electronic, remote controlled message board) for ease in changing the message; add an electronic message board to parking lot drop off /pick up area.
- De-emphasize the bulletin board or consider expanding access to printed information via kiosks located in areas of the school where parents drop off and pick up children (by car or walk in's).
- Keep building Yahoo Groups; be sure to “invite” parents to join whenever an email is collected for an event or fundraiser).
- Post information on the web site and use the Family newsletter to encourage people to go to the web site regularly.