

PURE *FACT SHEET* Starting a PTO

Your PTO can be as simple or as complex as fits your group. Here's a list of some things to do:

- 1) **Organize your parents and figure out WHY you want to exist.** Usually the priorities are volunteerism and fundraising. Often you'll find you are mostly formalizing activities parents are already doing. You'll also want to work closely with the school administration. (In my personal opinion, it's a mistake to drift into "fundraising" as the number one goal or to be seen as merely a fundraising organization.)
- 2) **Elect officers.** This is rather a "chicken or egg" kind of thing. Which comes first, the organization or the officers? I think it depends on the situation. If yours is a small effort, you may just want to start informally, decide who's who and then grow the organization schoolwide with the intent to have general elections in May. If you've already got some support, you could just have an announced meeting of all interested parents, and use a majority vote. If you're already to the semi-formal stage as an organization, you might go through the nomination and election process. Just whatever it takes to get the ball rolling with the most support.
- 3) **Start working on objectives, programs, and constitution/by-laws.** There are several sets of bylaws posted on PTO Today, and it's critical you go ahead and start with good, solid ones. Many of us will share. There's no point starting with a blank page – just find one that suits you and customize it as necessary.
- 4) **Figure out what projects you want to do** and start organizing the timeline and plans - don't overdo it right at first.
- 5) Organize your **committees** and recruit chairpersons.
- 6) Find out what **rules and policies**, if any, you need to consider within your school and school district. (How accounts must be administered, amount of oversight Principal might have, policies on fundraisers...)
- 7) File your SS4 form with the IRS to get a tax ID# (the organizational equivalent of a SSN – it's an easy one page form with no fee)
- 8) Somewhere along the way, you'll need to set up a checking account and consider other financial and other administrative details.
- 9) Find good ways to communicate with parents, teachers, school administrators and try to grow as a collaborative effort.
- 10) Have some FUN along the way! You'll work hard, but it's not supposed to be ALL work.

From: Chat room of PTO Today web site, www.ptotoday