

A Parent's Guide to Colin Powell Elementary School's Parent Teacher Association (PTA)



Home of the Proud Pumas!

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Introduction

Welcome to the Colin Powell Elementary School Community! We are glad your student(s) is attending this school. The school opened in September 2003 and was dedicated in June 2004.

This guide is meant to help you and to provide information to new and returning parents on the many PTA-sponsored activities and programs throughout the school year.

What is a PTA?¹

For more than a century, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has provided support, information and resources to families focused on the health and education of children. Everyone who joins a local PTA automatically becomes a member of both the state and National PTAs as well. The national PTA website is www.pta.org and the Virginia PTA website is www.vapta.org.

The Mission of the PTA

- To support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children;
- To assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children;
- To encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

The Purposes of the PTA

- To promote the welfare of the children and youth in home, school, community, and place of worship.
- To raise the standards of home life.
- To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.
- To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth.
- To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education.

Membership in the Colin Powell PTA

It is our goal to have a member of every household at Colin Powell as a member of our PTA. Members must renew their membership yearly. Typically at the

¹ The information for this section was taken from the National PTA website at www.pta.org.

start of the school year in September, the PTA will have a membership drive. Information concerning joining the PTA will be sent home in your child's weekly folder and you can sign up to help us with the various activities at Back to School nights.

As a member, you have the ability to vote and make decisions that affect the school and your student(s) and thus, all members are the "board of directors" of the PTA.

The PTA is run by a set of officers (executive committee) that are elected yearly by the membership. They are parents just like you. The positions on our PTA are as follows:

- President
- 1st Vice President
- 2nd Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Membership fees are as follows:

- Single Membership - \$8.00 (Powell PTA keeps \$5.25; \$2.75 must be paid to the state PTA)
- Couple Membership - \$15.00 (Powell PTA keeps \$9.50; \$5.50 must be paid to the state PTA)
- Staff Membership - \$6.00 (Powell PTA keeps \$3.25; \$2.75 must be paid to the state PTA. The amount is less in recognition that most of our staff have children at other schools and are PTA members where their children attend)

Monthly PTA Meetings

The PTA usually meets the first Tuesday of every month in the school library. All members and non-members are welcome to attend. The meetings typically start at 7pm and run an hour. Topics of discussion include upcoming activities and volunteer needs, a review of the budget, and reports on school-related events and activities. The meeting date and time will be announced in Mr. Hull's weekly newsletter, in the Puma Post (the PTA's monthly newsletter) and online at www.fcps.edu/powelles on the PTA page.

Methods of Communication

Throughout the school year, there will be a variety of ways in which you will receive information about the activities at Powell. Some of these are directly supported by PTA and some are supported by the school. You can expect to see, read, hear or receive the following through out the school year:

- **Weekly Tuesday Folder** – teachers send home a weekly folder in a big white envelope in the students' backpacks. Parents sign off weekly that they have received the contents inside. The contents usually consist of your child's work they have completed over the week as well as a weekly newsletter from the administration. It will also contain important flyers about upcoming activities at the school.
- **Weekly Newsletter** – this is a letter prepared by the principals. It is no more than two pages long and is typically on yellow paper. It highlights events, information, etc. that you may need to be aware of.
- **Puma Post** – this is the PTA monthly newsletter. It provides detailed information on current and future activities taking place in or around the school community.
- **Flyers** – throughout the year, flyers will be placed in your child's Tuesday folder. They announce PTA-sponsored family activities as well as events that will occur during the school day. They typically inform, but also request the need for volunteers.
- **Volunteer Email Distribution List** – you can sign up for this list at the start of the year (during Back to School Nights) or anytime through out the year. This email distribution is used to solicit help and volunteers for activities throughout the year, but also provides information on activities that are coming up. The volunteer coordinator maintains the e-mail distribution list – you can be added to that distribution list by sending an e-mail to cpesvolunteers@verizon.net.
- **Colin Powell Web Site** – the school has a web site and the PTA has a dedicated page. The web site is <http://www.fcps.edu/powelles> you can also access information on what is going on in at all of the Fairfax County schools by going to www.fcps.edu
- **CPNN** – the Colin Powell News Network is a morning news show presented every morning that is seen by the students in their classrooms. It is presented by students via the in-house studio. Your kids receive information concerning activities and items taking place at the school. The PTA will use the show to advertise activities coming up as well.
- **PTA Calendar** – the calendar is posted on the school web site under PTA. It provides information on the activities and programs at the school throughout the year.

Programs Sponsored By PTA

The PTA will sponsor many programs through out the school year, which are made possible due by fundraising events. Fundraising will be discussed in another section. The various programs help enrich our children's educational experience while attending Powell. Here are a few examples of where your money goes when you participate in the fundraising activities of our PTA:

- Arts in the School
 - A program in which parent volunteers to go into classrooms on a monthly basis, and share an artist and their art work and style. A project accompanies the lesson with all supplies and materials provided by PTA.
- Cultural Arts Program
 - In-school assemblies that include:
 - Visits by authors and poets
 - Visits by individuals that make learning fun on topics of math and science
 - Performances by dance troupes, actors, singers, educators that correspond with the curriculum taught at that time.
- Field Trips
 - PTA pays for some field trip expenses, including buses, and some fees for all grades through out the year.
- Grade Level Support
 - PTA provides funds for each grade level to assist with special projects throughout the year
 - For example, 4th grade has a "Colonial Day" in which students get to experience colonial life in Virginia with hands-on activities, costumes and customs.
- Staff Development
 - PTA reimburses staff members for registration fees for continuing education courses they may attend through out the year.
- Instructional Supplies
 - PTA pays for certain instructional supplies that may be needed throughout the year
 - In previous years the PTA has bought new white board technology for classrooms as well as two cameras and a mixer for in-house studio.
- Scholarships
 - PTA helps defray field trip costs for some families in need in our school community. Privacy is maintained and these students are able to participate fully in these enrichment activities.
- School Directory
 - PTA provides a directory of students, their mailing addresses and phone numbers for every family at Powell. It is a great reference tool through out the year, and the PTA prints, collates and helps distribute these directories to each and every student.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are many ways you can help with the PTA-sponsored activities throughout the year. You decide on how much time you can commit but every minute helps. Every year the PTA seeks support via volunteers signing up to participate on committees. The Powell PTA has over 35 committees. A sampling of them is as follows:

- Hospitality – making food!
- Teacher Appreciation – help thank our teachers and staff during the first week in May
- Cultural Arts – contact and coordinate the in-school performances and assemblies
- Chess Club – coordinate the students and instructor(s) for this before or after-school activity
- Hands on Science – become a teacher of interesting science experiments by participating in this before or after school educational activity
- International Night – represent your country's culture, cuisine and costume during this multi-cultural event in February
- Arts in School – visit your student(s) classroom each month by presenting an artist and activity to the students
- Directory – help collate, print and distribute this valuable tool
- Yearbook – take photos throughout the year and help layout this charming memory book for distribution at the end of the school year
- Carnival – help us run the many games, food stands and activities during this Saturday in March
- Silent Auction – donate an item, service, gift card, class basket to help raise money for both the PTA and participating classrooms
- Family Fun – bring your friends and family to venues such as McDonald's, Silver Diner, Chick-Fil-A, and many others throughout the year that donate a portion of their revenues to our PTA.

Room Parent

This is an important role that helps both the teachers and the PTA. At the start of the school year, teachers will have sign up sheets in their classrooms with volunteer opportunities in your child's classroom. Every classroom is in need of a room parent. This individual can be a mom or dad and can be a shared position with several parents. The room parent will be provided with information and instructions on the teacher's need, which typically deals with coordinating classroom parties, etc. The PTA coordinates with this individual and they are a

source by which the PTA can communicate directly to the class. PTA Activities that the room parent helps communicate to the class on is as follows:

- Silent Auction
 - Room parents work with their parents in the classroom to create a “class basket” based on an assigned theme. Donations of items or money are collected by the room parent, and the room parent puts the basket together. The basket is auctioned off at the Silent Auction, which occurs during the day of the Winter Carnival in March. Half of the proceeds from the sale of the baskets goes to the PTA and the other half is equally divided among each grade’s classrooms that participate.
- Carnival
 - Room parents work with their parents in the classroom to get volunteers to work at the carnival for an hour or so at the Winter Carnival one Saturday in March. Each classroom is assigned a specific game or activity that is manned by parent volunteers during the carnival.
- Staff Appreciation Week
 - Room parents work with their parents in the classroom to assist with the planning and activities that may be needed that week in early May. Room parents may ask the parents to send in notes from home, food items, flowers, etc. to show each teacher and staff member how much they are appreciated.

The Room Parent is an important link between the classrooms and the success of the many PTA-sponsored activities. Please consider helping as a room parent this year!

Fundraising/Income for the PTA

PTAs are non-profit organizations and monies are generated via fundraising events. **At Powell we try to keep hard-sell fundraising to a minimum.** The following are the main Powell PTA fundraisers:

- **Selling of Sally Foster Gift Wrap** – the sale begins at the start of the school year in September and ends with orders delivered in November. Your student(s) is able to sell quality gift wrap and gift items to friends and family members, in person and ONLINE. It’s a great opportunity to buy all your gift wrap (and some holiday gift items) and support the PTA at the same time. The PTA receives 50% of all sales. Sally Foster is our biggest fundraiser of the entire year, and represents the largest percentage of the operating budget (48%!), supporting PTA activities throughout the school year.

- **Silent Auction** – occurs during the school’s carnival, one Saturday afternoon in March. Parents/community members have the opportunity to bid on donated items. Items donated in the past include Four Day Hopper passes to DisneyWorld, local restaurants gift certificates, passes to historical sites in Virginia, sports tickets and class baskets with themes like “Chocolate Lovers”, “Dogs”, “Cats”, “Gone Fishing”, etc. In the past, the revenue from the Silent Auction has represented 19% of the monies for the PTA.
- **Carnival** – occurs one Saturday afternoon in March at the school. It is an opportunity for the entire community (including friends from other schools, states and countries!) to come to the school and enjoy a day of family-friendly games, activities, music and food. The Carnival and Silent Auction combined represent 27% of the PTA’s income.
- **50/50 Raffle** – tickets are sold prior to the Carnival to friends, family, co-workers, etc.. And, the drawing takes place at the Winter Carnival. The PTA and raffle winner SPLIT the money, 50/50! In years past, the winner has taken home up to \$2,000! The PTA typically has an identified for these funds, like the purchase of video equipment, technology supplies, landscaping, funding new playground equipment, etc.
- **Donations** – the PTA will accept donations of money through out the year. Many PTA members will add some money to their membership dues to be directly donated to the Colin Powell PTA.
- **Spirit Wear** – the PTA sells clothing and accessory items that have the Powell Puma and the school’s name/logo. Children love to show their school pride by wearing t-shirts or sweat shirts that display the Proud Powell Puma!
- **Bonus Bucks** – this is a program sponsored by Giant Food. After an initial registration (each year), a portion of the cost of items you purchase from Giant is donated directly back to the school in the form of a large check! Each year, this money has been used to purchase student agenda books for the following school year (organizational notebooks with calendar for the school year and where students keep their class assignments) for each and every student.

Activities Throughout the School Year

There are many fun PTA-sponsored family activities as well as in-school activities throughout the year. Following is a typical school year of PTA activities and events:

Sept, Oct., Nov, Dec.

- Fundraising Activity of Selling Sally Foster
 - All students receive a sales packet and catalog

- Reflections – is a national PTA activity where students enter a creative arts contest, creating entries in a variety of forms (photography, music, poetry, visual arts, etc.) on a common theme. Participation is encouraged at all grade levels and all participants are recognized at a November recognition ceremony and awards night. Pieces are judged by grade level and medium and students have the opportunity to compete at local, regional, state and national levels.
- Start of chess club – parents pay a fee to enroll students in this before school activity. A professional instructor is on-hand to teach the strategies of chess and help students improve their skills.
- Hands on Science – parents pay a fee to enroll students in this before/after school activity that includes specialized science curriculum. Parents are encouraged to sign up as teachers for the three sessions per school year and are paid for their involvement.
- Corn Maize – family fun event – allows for families to get together outside of the school in a fun day of farm activities, hay rides and an exciting life-sized maze through a corn-field!
- November lunch – there is a day set aside where parents and family members can have lunch with their student(s) the Colin Powell cafeteria. The pumpkin ice cream is great!
- Dinner at the Silver Diner – family fun event – families go out to dinner at the Fair Lakes Silver Diner and the Powell PTA gets a portion of the proceeds! Staff members and administrators become hosts and waiters!

Jan., Feb., March

- International Night – a time for our school community to share in the diversity that makes up Powell. Students and families can display their culture, cuisine and costume and can participate in a “talent show” of global proportions! Truly a fun Friday evening event for the entire family!
- Chick-Fil-A Night – a family fun event where families are invited to dine at a local Chick-Fil-A one evening. A portion of the proceeds for that evening are paid to the PTA.
- Winter Carnival – a fun event for the entire community with games, music and food. Takes place on a Saturday afternoon in March
- Silent Auction – items donated to the PTA are displayed and open for bids during the Winter Carnival.
- Read Across America – March 2 is the day we honor and celebrate Dr. Seuss’ birthday. Volunteers are encouraged to sign up to read Dr. Seuss books to the students. And, the Cat in the Hat typically makes an appearance!

April, May, June

- McEducator's Night – a time when families go to a local McDonald's and get to see staff behind the counters serving them! A portion of the proceeds for that evening is paid to the PTA.
- Staff Appreciation Week – this is a time for us to thank the wonderful staff members at Powell. It is always the first week of May and tied to a theme. There are activities through out the week to honor and thank our staff
- Prince William Nationals Game – a time for families to come together outside of school and enjoy a baseball game.
- Family Dance – an end of year casual party/dance for the entire family. A DJ plays fun line dances, hosts contests for all ages and encourages everyone to join in the fun to celebrate the end of the school year. This event is a FREE event to Colin Powell students and families, fully funded by the PTA.

We hope this Parent's Guide has helped answer some questions you had about the Parent Teacher Association at Colin Powell Elementary School. It's presented to you by some PTA Officers (and proud Puma parents!) who wish they'd had this information when the school first opened!

A big thanks to Robin Seabrook and Delia Valentine for writing and editing this guide. Also, a million thanks to all the wonderful parent volunteers who make our PTA so special!

You can view this guide and the full PTA Calendar of events online. Just visit Colin Powell's Website (www.fcps.edu/powelles) and click on the PTA page (CPES PTA).