



back the future Days Toolkit



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACK THE FUTURE DAYS OVERVIEW .....	3
<i>Timeline of Activities</i> .....	5
<i>Elevator Speech</i> .....	6
<i>Talking Points</i> .....	6
<i>Q&amp;A</i> .....	6
MEDIA ALERT TEMPLATE .....	7
SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS & VOLUNTEERS .....	8
SAMPLE LETTER TO COMMUNITY LEADER.....	9
MEDIA INTERVIEW GUIDELINES .....	10
PHOTO/VIDEO WAIVER .....	11



# back the future Days Overview

Each year, sending children and youth back to school opens the door for larger discussions with parents and families about what PTA stands for, and how to get involved.

We believe it's time to make the PTA relevant to new audiences and introduce Texans to the PTA of today.

This year, we are taking the opportunity to rally the community by launching a new campaign around back-to-school. It's more than about new backpacks and new classrooms! Texas PTA wants to shift the focus to inspiring community leaders and members to **back the future**.

Successful students are everyone's business, and successful schools build successful communities. And we know there is no community without YOU, so to speak – "YOU" being our members, our future members, community leaders and communities at large.

## **back the future Campaign**

The theme "back the future" centers on our belief that an investment in the education of Texas children is an investment in our communities' future. How will we launch this? With what we call "back the future Days" – ownable moments in time – where we will put **CommYOU**nity into action.

The idea is to host events across Texas at the beginning of the school year when excitement is high and families are on campus, to celebrate education, involve the community and hopefully inspire new membership and participation.

We encourage you to invite local community leaders – from business leaders and local officials to entrepreneurs and "celebrities" – to attend your back the future Day, perhaps to ring the school bell to ring in the year, host a pep rally, serve as a guest crossing guard or a guest teacher/speaker.

This toolkit is intended to guide you in planning "back the future Days" in your backyard, in any of three scalable concepts. We absolutely hope you will make this your own, customizing with local resources and ideas. This is solely a roadmap, not set in stone. This document includes sample scenarios, suggested timeline and checklist, campaign talking points and Q&A.

In addition, the following collateral will be available to you in both English and Spanish. **To purchase, please visit the [S.T.A.R. Co-op](https://www.txpta.org) and for questions or special requests, contact Melissa Day, Director of Communications ([mday@txpta.org](mailto:mday@txpta.org) / 512-320-9813).**

- Posters (8.5 x 11", 11" x 17")
- Window decals
- Yard signs
- Tee-shirts
- Wristbands
- Lanyards
- Stickers





Texas PTA's public relations partner, Edelman, will be driving media outreach on a state level and in major markets. For your specific market, please review and customize the media alert and press release for local distribution, to encourage media attendance and coverage of how your school, district and community are going to back the future.

### **Scalable Event Scenarios**

We recommend tailoring one of the following events based on your location, resources and needs. These are purely meant to be thought-starters to help make your back the future Day engaging and successful. They may take place before school starts (e.g., Meet the Teacher Night, Open House), the first day of school, the first week of school or the weeks to follow.

**Scenario A:** Gather families, educators and several community leaders for a special event. Continue with all-day engagement, inviting community leaders to participate in various student touch points (crossing guards, cafeteria workers, classroom visits), culminating in a special pep rally where stories are shared around the positive impact a teacher or mentor had on a community leader's development and ultimate success.

**Scenario B:** Gather families, parents and one keynote community leader for a special event, reinforcing the value of community-supported education. Materials and collateral are displayed throughout the school, throughout the day.

**Scenario C:** Welcome parents into a common area following drop-off for breakfast with PTA volunteers – or snacks during an after-school gathering – and the opportunity to join/learn more about how to back the future. Display back the future posters and other collateral throughout the school.

For all of the above scenarios, we highly encourage capturing photos/videos/content and sharing via school and individual social media platforms. We also encourage implementing the back the future social media avatar for school and individual pages.

**For questions about campaign logistics, please contact Allison Strupeck, Director of Member Services ([astrupeck@txpta.org](mailto:astrupeck@txpta.org) / 512-320-9821).**



## **We Need Your Help!**

We know the beginning of school is one of the busiest times of the year, and we want to help streamline your back the future Day as much as possible. Below we have prepared a checklist and suggested timeline for preparation leading up to your event day. In short, we are asking you to:

- ✓ Select activities that are scalable to execute
- ✓ Organize volunteers and contact elected officials and community leaders that you would like to participate. This could be anyone such as your town mayor, police officer or local business leader
- ✓ Identify and secure a photographer to capture the event. This could range from a professional to a volunteer with a digital camera
- ✓ Send media alert (pg. 7) to local media such as newspapers, radio and news stations
- ✓ Distribute promotional PTA items such as signage, stickers and decals

## **Timeline of Activities**

<b>Checklist</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Sketch out day-of run of show, select activities to execute	4 weeks out
Identify community leaders, elected officials, other special guests to ring school bell/make remarks	4 weeks out
Send invitations to community leaders	4 weeks out
Identify all other target attendees, volunteers	4 weeks out
Send invitations to target attendees, volunteers	3 weeks out
Send note to PTA members with location and agenda	3 weeks out
Identify staff members and tasks for beginning of school activities (staff assignment list)	3 weeks out
Identify and secure photographer	3 weeks out
Identify and secure site plan/room layout (chairs, tables)	2 weeks out
Identify and secure AV needs (sound system, laptop, projector, video camera)	2 weeks out
Advance notices (local media)	1 week out
Distribute messaging/media materials to spokespeople	1 week out
Distribute yard signs, window decals and other promotional items to members/parents	1 week out
Distribute shareable social media content for volunteers, community members and new members with action plan	1 week out
Set up room/stage	1 day out
Distribute media alert to broadcast media	1 day out
Put up signage around school	1 day out



## Elevator Speech

Before we know it, school bells will be ringing again. In preparation, parents will buy new backpacks, lunch boxes and tennis shoes. But is that everything we need for back to school? Texas PTA will launch ***back the future*** in August, and we need communities across the state to support it. This campaign is designed to increase membership and awareness of the importance of community engagement. Successful students are everyone's business, and successful schools build successful communities. It will take all of us, and that includes you, to ***back the future***. Join PTA and ask others to do the same! You don't have to be a parent to join – anyone who cares about community can – because there is no **CommYOU**nity without **YOU**.

## Basic Talking Points

- For a century, PTA has been steadfast in elevating education in our Texas communities.
- Times are evolving and so is PTA – making a renewed investment in the education of Texas children, and an investment in the future of our communities.
- PTA is more than a group of involved parents and teachers: it is a community that cares deeply about the success of Texas children.
- We know that thriving schools turn out graduates. But more importantly, schools tether and grow the economy through safer neighborhoods, growing businesses and attracting talent.

## Q&A

### Who is Texas PTA?

- Texas PTA is the largest child advocacy grassroots association in Texas with over 500,000 members. They are parents, teachers and others who have a special interest in children, youth, families and schools.
- The organization's mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.
- The PTA encourages parents, teachers, community members and leaders to collectively engage with the association on the local and state levels.
- More than just members, contributors are leaders and advocates for the children of Texas, benefiting from access to valuable programs, resources and a voice at the Texas Capitol.

### Who can become a member?

- It's not required to have school-aged children to be involved. Anyone who cares about community can join PTA – because there is no **CommYOU**nity without **YOU**.
- More than room parents and volunteers, members are leaders and advocates for our children.
- Members have access not only to educational resources, but larger programs that promote and impact student success – and a bigger voice that impacts the community and the Capitol.

### What is different this year?

- Texas PTA is inviting members of communities across the state to “back the future” by becoming a PTA member and joining in the celebration of the start of the 2014-2015 school year.
- In celebration, schools across Texas are hosting beginning of school events inviting community leaders as special guests. We are thrilled to be a part of it!



**\* \* \* MEDIA ALERT \* \* \***

**WHAT:** [INSERT SCHOOL] is backing the future with [COMMUNITY LEADER] at [INSERT EVENT DETAILS].

This is one of many “back the future” events taking place Texas-wide at the beginning of the school year, in celebration of the start of the 2014-2015 academic year. These events align with Texas PTA’s new “back the future” campaign, an invitation and rallying cry for Texans to band together in support of Texas students and communities.

**Interview opportunities include:**

- INSERT SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE(S)

**WHEN:** [INSERT DATE]  
[INSERT INTERVIEW OPP TIMES AND HOW TO COORDINATE]

**WHERE:** [INSERT ADDRESS AND ANY ARRIVAL/PARKING INSTRUCTIONS]

**MORE:** Regardless of life stage, community members of all walks of life are encouraged to “back the future” by joining and supporting PTA in any number of ways. Members of PTA are leaders and advocates for the children of Texas, benefiting from valuable programs, resources and a voice at the Texas Capitol.

**CONTACT:** [INSERT ON-SITE SCHOOL CONTACT WITH E-MAIL/CELL PHONE]  
Kim Tillinghast, Edelman – kim.tillinghast@edelman.com / 214-995-8082

###

Texas PTA is the largest grassroots association in Texas with more than 500,000 members – parents, teachers and others who have a special interest in children, youth, families and schools. For more information, visit <http://www.txpta.org>, find us on Twitter ([@txstatepta](https://twitter.com/txstatepta)), [Facebook](#) and [Pinterest](#), or contact the state office at 800-TALK-PTA.



## Sample Letter to Parents and Volunteers

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

Dear [PREFIX] [LAST NAME]:

On [DATE] at [TIME], [SCHOOL] will be hosting [EVENT] at [LOCATION] with [parents/educators/elected officials/community leaders] to celebrate education and rally the community around going back to school.

As a [parent/PTA member/volunteer], you already know the importance of building education and taking a comprehensive approach to community success. This year when we go back to school, we are doing things a little differently: we are coming together to launch **back the future**, the PTA's new campaign centered on increase membership and awareness of the importance of community engagement. Successful students are everyone's business, and successful schools build successful communities. It will take all of us, and that includes you, to back the future.

**I am writing on behalf of the PTA to invite you to attend [EVENT] on [DATE] at [TIME] in [LOCATION].**

In addition to attending the celebration, we would like to [activity/ask]. [EVENT] will [DESCRIPTION OF EVENT ACTIVITIES] in order to inform and engage [parents/educators/elected officials/community leaders] and let them know how they can get involved.

We hope that you will be available to join us on [DATE] to help us celebrate and reach [parents/educators/elected officials/community leaders] with our message. Throughout your work in our community, you have shown your commitment to improving education and academic outcomes for Texas students. We hope you will accept this opportunity to help us spread the word about **back the future** and ask others to do the same.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE], [ORGANIZATION]





## Sample Letter to Elected Official or Community Leader

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

Dear [PREFIX] [LAST NAME]:

On [DATE] at [TIME], [SCHOOL] will be hosting [EVENT] at [LOCATION] with [parents/educators/elected officials/community leaders] to celebrate education and rally the community around going back to school. This year when we go back to school, we are doing things a little differently: we are coming together to launch **back the future**, the PTA's new campaign centered on building education and taking a comprehensive approach to community success.

**I am writing to invite you to (attend/deliver remarks) at [EVENT] on [DATE] at [TIME] in [LOCATION].** In addition to [attending/delivering remarks], we would like to recognize and honor you for your dedication to Texas students and education.

We know that successful students are everyone's business, and successful schools build successful communities. It will take all of us, and that includes you, to **back the future**. [EVENT] will [DESCRIPTION OF EVENT ACTIVITIES] in order to inform and engage [parents/educators/elected officials/community leaders] and let them know how they can get involved.

We hope that you will be available to join us on [DATE] to help us celebrate and reach [parents/educators/elected officials/community leaders] with our message. Throughout your work in our community, you have shown your commitment to improving education and academic outcomes for Texas students. We hope you will accept this opportunity to help us spread the word about **back the future** and ask others to do the same.

We will contact your staff in the coming days to discuss this opportunity further. In the meantime, if you would like additional information, please contact [NAME] at [EMAIL] or [PHONE].

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE], [ORGANIZATION]



## General Guidelines for Media Interviews

- Always tell the truth. If it will probably come out anyway, you can exert some control over the form of its release.
- Never talk off the record. If you don't want to see it in print, don't say it.
- Go in with points you want to make and then make them. Respond to a direct question directly; then bridge to your point.
- Never lose your cool -- even in the face of hostile questions.
- State the most important fact first. Then explain, give context.
- When appropriate, talk in personal terms. Use "I."
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say: "I don't have that information, but I'll find out and get back to you." Then make sure you do so. You might also say: "I don't have that specific information. What I can tell you is..."
- Don't repeat offensive words, even to deny them.
- If you are asked about an irrelevant topic, say, "I'm not prepared to discuss that right now. I'm here to talk about. . ."
- Never say "No comment." If you can't talk about something, say why not.
- Never speculate. Never speak for anyone else; that includes explaining why they said what they did.
- Don't guess and don't provide an opinion. No amount of hedging can separate you from the company when you are the spokesperson. You don't have the luxury of a personal opinion in this context.
- Answer in complete sentences.
- Think in terms of 8- to 15-second sound bites (ink bites).
- Read the morning papers; watch TV news; listen to the radio, and check the Internet. Also, try to become familiar -- in advance -- with media likely to cover your school.

### Additional Tips:

- It's ok to show enthusiasm
- Assume your microphone is live and that the camera is on you at all times
- Look at the interviewer, not the camera
- Stand with feet close together to prevent swaying. Hold hands loosely at sides



## **Texas PTA Photography/Video Waiver**

I hereby give Texas PTA, their agents and/or assignees, the right to use photographs/videos that have been taken of me as often as desired and in as many applications as desired, including but not limited to brochures, advertisements, web site postings, and magazine articles. I waive right of approval and release TX PTA from all claims which I may or can have on account of use or publication of said photographs/videos.

I am of full age and freely agree to these terms which I have read and understand.

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRINT NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGN NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_



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