

PTA FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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Answers:

1. What is the PTA?

PTA stands for “Parent-Teacher Association” and is an organization made up of parent/caregiver volunteers, teachers, and staff members. The PTA strives to facilitate family involvement in our schools in order to promote and enhance our children’s educational experience. The PTA wishes to cultivate a strong working relationship among families, teachers, staff and the school to support our students. The PTA is also an advocate for the education and well-being of every child. Meetings are held at least three times a year at which the principal, teachers and parents/caregivers can discuss upcoming school events, the PTA budget and any school matters that concern the PTA and families.

2. What does the Northeast PTA do?

The Northeast PTA is a very active community of parents/caregivers and staff, working hard to build and promote our community of students, families and staff. Our PTA supports the national and state PTAs which give us a voice in national and state policies and funding. In addition, our PTA organizes, funds, and/or contributes to these Northeast programs and more:

- After-school enrichment classes in areas such as art, science, cooking, chess
- All-school spring Carnival
- Building our new playground
- New books for our school and classroom libraries
- Scholastic book fairs
- Movie nights
- Ice skating at Cass Park
- Bike safety rodeo
- International Night
- Picture Day
- School year book
- School directory
- Northeast Link (school newsletter)
- Evening programs for parents on topics such as the Common Core Curriculum, cyber safety, and bullying.
- Funding for class field trips
- Books for Birthdays
- Staff appreciation activities
- Scholarships for enrichment classes, basketball and ski club
- Kindergarten playground days (summer)
- Back-to-school and end-of-year picnics
- Teacher grants

3. How does the PTA fund it all?

The PTA is a 301 (c) 5 non-profit organization that funds its programs primarily from fundraising efforts by our PTA volunteers and from PTA dues. **The PTA receives no money from school taxes, local, state or federal government.** Our money comes from tax-deductible donations and fundraisers such as the Fall FUNdraiser, Send Your Staff Packing, Silver Graphics sales, Scholastic Book Fair, Family Portrait Night, and the Spring Carnival. Many of our other PTA programs and events such as ski club, basketball, and enrichment classes pay for themselves. The PTA uses its money to pay for International Night, Staff Appreciation events, birthday books, new books for the school and classroom libraries, teacher grants, scholarships for school activities, publishing the school directory and much more.

4. Can I donate money to our PTA?

Yes and the donation is eligible for a deduction on your federal income taxes. PTA dues support both the New York State PTA and the Northeast PTA, with a consequential amount going to support NYS PTA activities. On the other

hand, tax-deductible donations and fundraisers support only Northeast PTA programming. You can make a donation to the NE PTA at any time, including when you join the PTA (simply note it on the membership form and include the gift with your membership dues). The PTA will gladly provide a letter confirming your tax-deductible contribution for tax purposes.

5. Why does the PTA need volunteers?

We rely on our community of parent/caregiver and staff volunteers to organize and run the programs for our kids and to raise money to fund PTA activities. Our PTA gets no money from local, state, or federal government. Our money comes from our membership dues, donations, and PTA fundraising activities. It is important to remember that without our active parent/caregiver and staff volunteers, we would not have the wonderful activities and programs that we've come to expect and rely on. Your time makes a difference. Depending on your available time, you can:

- spend an hour helping at the Spring Carnival, knowing that you're building a community for your child and family at Northeast

- take attendance for an enrichment class and give your child and his/her friends the chance to learn chess or create pottery.

- sell books at the book fair and provide new books and equipment for our school library.

Who does this important work? The parents, caregivers, staff and families of Northeast students do.

6. Does my family need to join the PTA for us to participate in PTA-sponsored events?

No. PTA-sponsored events are open to the Northeast Elementary School community and do not require PTA membership. However, membership provides important funding for the PTA-sponsored events, and allows you to have a vote in PTA business such as electing officers and voting on the PTA budget.

7. Do I need to join the PTA to volunteer for PTA activities?

No. We welcome and appreciate all volunteers whether they are official PTA members or not.

8. If I don't need to join the PTA to participate in PTA activities, why should I join the PTA officially?

For a just a small payment, PTA membership shows your support for an organization that provides valuable services to your child and your child's school. Because the PTA is entirely run by funds from its membership fees and fundraising, your PTA dues make a difference. Membership provides important funding for PTA-sponsored events, and allows you to have a vote in PTA business such as electing officers and voting on the PTA operating budget. This financial support also gives us a voice in local, state, and federal policy through our state and national organizations. By joining and taking a leadership position in one of the PTA committees, you have the opportunity to influence events at school and set the tone for the PTA. Your membership will support the educational life at Northeast by helping to fund our many programs and also by showing your solidarity with other Northeast parents and staff.

9. If I join the PTA, will I be required to volunteer?

No, there is absolutely no obligation to volunteer. We can always use help, but we understand about busy lives and family priorities. Just by sending in an application and membership fee, you will be supporting the educational life at Northeast by contributing financially to PTA programs and by showing your solidarity with other parents and the staff.

10. Why should I be volunteer for PTA events or programs?

By getting involved in your child's school, you are getting involved with one of the most important parts of his/her life. It keeps you connected to the school and ensures that you can directly impact your child's experience at school.

By raising funds to help the school, we are influencing the activities and programs available at our school – whether it be for a Halloween parade, playground equipment, or an evening programs for parents/caregivers. These are all vital to the schools success, and you can be part of that.

The PTA gives you an opportunity to grow personally. You'll get to know other parents, caregivers and staff in the school community and form new friendships. In addition, the PTA allows you to put your skills and hobbies to use or to learn new skills. The PTA can always use your organizational acumen, computer skills, marketing ability, financial expertise, and artistic talents.

Finally, your child will be proud and excited when they see you involved in their school. They enjoy having you be part of their school experience. There is no pressure to get heavily involved. You can help a little, or help a lot. You can volunteer to organize the whole carnival or just sell a few tickets -- it's entirely up to you.

11. If I do volunteer, how much time will I have to give?

Volunteer opportunities exist that fit every schedule. You can volunteer as much or as little as you like. See question #13 for what volunteer job might work for you.

12. I work during the day, how can I help the PTA?

There are many volunteer opportunities that happen in the early evening and weekends. Some examples are coaching basketball, helping with Carnival, International Night, the Great Escape, or movie night. There are also PTA committee positions that can be done on your own schedule such as managing the listserv, running the PTA website, collecting and submitting Box Tops, and organizing Movie Night.

13. I'd like to volunteer, what can I do that will fit into my schedule?

Thank you for asking about volunteering! We have sign-up sheets at the beginning of the year where you can sign up for different committees and events. Volunteer requests are also sent throughout the year via email and flyers. Here are some suggestions for volunteer opportunities:

• I can spare two or three hours occasionally

- Sell books at the Scholastic book fair. Shifts can be 1 ½ hours or 2 ¾ hours long (fall and spring).
- Sell concessions at Movie Night. These happen throughout the year.
- Spend 2 hours preparing kids for their photo on Picture Day in September.
- Supervise the kids in the Halloween Parade.
- Help for 1-2 hours at the Bike Rodeo (June)
- Work a 2 hour shift at Carnival by selling tickets, serving food, or running a game (June)
- Set up, serve, or clean up at the Staff Luncheon (May)
- Volunteer for 20-30 minutes/week to collect deposits for the NE Credit Union. Need not be every week.

• I can spare one or two hours a week regularly

- Take attendance for Enrichment classes once a week for 6 weeks and your child's class fee will be waived.
- Run the 5th grade camera club for 1 hour a week throughout the year
- Help with ice skating or ski club for 8 weeks
- Be a coach for one of the basketball teams

• I can spare 10 to 20 hours total in the spring or fall.

- Help organize the Halloween Parade
- Be a committee member to help with the Staff Appreciation Luncheon
- Be a committee member to help with International Night
- Be a committee member to help with the Spring Carnival
- Organize Picture Day (Fall)
- Join the Scholastic Book Fair committee
- Run the Family Portrait Fundraiser

● **I work during the day, are there volunteer opportunities in the evenings and weekends?**

- Coach basketball – one hour in the evening and one hour on the weekend
- Help with the PTA website
- Manage the PTA listserv
- Volunteer to help at the family portrait fundraiser held in the evening or on the weekend
- Work tickets and concessions at Movie Night
- Help at Carnival (one evening in June)
- Be one of the organizers for International Night or Carnival.

Program leaders will request volunteers for these positions on the Northeast Yahoo Group (Listserv) or in the Northeast Link (PTA newsletter) throughout the year. If you are especially interested in a specific volunteer opportunity, please feel free to contact the organizer (name can be found in the School Directory) directly.

14. How do I sign up to volunteer for the PTA?

Some of the volunteer opportunities have sign-ups at the first PTA meeting, but usually organizers send volunteer requests via the Northeast Yahoo Group (Listserv) or in the Northeast Link (PTA newsletter). Organizers may be coordinating large numbers of volunteers, so please don't worry if you don't get an immediate response. If you are especially interested in a specific volunteer opportunity, please feel free to contact the organizer (in School Directory) directly.

15. Can I start a new program for our kids and have the PTA sponsor my activity?

Thank you for helping improve the quality of our kids' educational experience. If you are interested in starting a new program, please feel free to contact one of the officers on the PTA Board to discuss your idea and how the PTA might be involved. Contact information can be found in the School Directory and on the PTA website.

15. What is the Northeast PTA Yahoo Group (Listserv)?

The PTA Yahoo Group is an online community for families of Northeast Elementary students to receive emails with updates and information about the school as well as a forum to discuss issues related to the school. You can post questions and information relevant to the school community. The principal often sends information and news on the Yahoo Group forum. Although information will also be sent in written form, the listserv provides information quickly and broadly. Note, if you want to avoid too much email, you can adjust your group settings so no messages are sent to your email and you can read the posts on Yahoo Group website only.

16. How do I sign up for the Northeast PTA Yahoo Group (Listserv)?

To join, please do one of the following:

- Go to the Northeast PTA website at www.northeastpta.com and click on the link to join.
- Send an email to NortheastPTA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Programs and Events Sponsored by the Northeast PTA

| Program | Description | Time of Year |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| 5th Grade Camera Club | 5 th grader students learn about using cameras and photography, and contribute to the Northeast Yearbook. | All year |
| Basketball | In partnership with the Ithaca Youth Bureau, Northeast fields basketball teams for boys and girls in grades 3-5. Our teams compete against teams from the seven other Ithaca elementary schools. It is a great way for our kids to be active, learn basketball and meet students from the other elementary schools, many of whom will be attending middle and high school with them. | January through March |
| Bike Rodeo | The Cayuga Heights Police instruct the students on safe bike riding, proper signaling, and other safety tips. Kindergarten through 5 th grade students show what they've learned by cycling their way through an obstacle course. | June |
| Bike Helmets | Discounted bicycle helmets sold through this program | Spring |
| Box Tops | The PTA collects the "Box Tops for Education" from packaging and redeems them for money that is used to fund PTA events and scholarships. | All year long |
| Carnival | A well-loved all-school event featuring a cake walk, a chance to dunk the principal, pizza, and lots of great games. | June |
| Enrichment Classes | The PTA runs after-school enrichment classes that cover diverse topics such as science, chess, pottery, singing, glass-making, fencing, and much more. There are three 6-week session in the year. | October to June |
| Fall FUNdraiser show | A benefit for the Ithaca elementary schools featuring popular local performing artists. | Fall |
| Family Portrait Fundraiser | Families get a portrait sitting for only \$10 and have the opportunity to buy photos of other poses. | Fall |
| Halloween Parade | After-school costume parade around the school neighborhood. | October |
| Ice Skating Club | Students can put on skates, take a lesson and enjoy time after school with friends at Cass Park Rink. | October to April |
| International Night | An evening of international food, cultural exhibits, and performances that celebrate the many cultures and traditions we have at Northeast. | Early Winter |
| Ithaca SMArts | Science, math, and arts competitive team | Spring |
| Kindergarten meet your teacher day | Meet your kindergartener's new classmates and teacher at this PTA event. | Usually the last Saturday before Labor Day |
| Kindergarten playdates | Playdates scheduled throughout the summer so your kindergartener can meet his or her new classmates. | Summer |
| Movie Night | Parents and kids can enjoy a movie and pizza with their friends. | Spaced throughout the year |
| NE Credit Union | Help students learn the importance of saving money with the Northeast Credit Union! | Throughout year |
| NE Yahoo Group (Listserv) | Be connected with the Northeast community! Sign up for the Northeast listserv and receive school announcements and news via email. | All year |
| NE Link | Monthly newsletter keeping the Northeast community informed | |
| Picture Day | The PTA helps run picture day, so your child can have a great school photo. | September and November |
| PTA Council | Representatives from every ICSD PTA come together in the PTA Council, which meets monthly. | 4-5 meetings a year |
| Scholastic Book Fair Fundraiser | A bi-annual book sale open to students and their families during the school day with special evening hours for families. The Scholastic Book Fair provides books for the school library and a credit for each teacher to buy books for the classroom. | Fall and Spring |
| School Directory | The PTA puts out this free school directory for students, parents and staff. The directory is a great resource for contacting teachers, school administration, students and their families. | Fall |
| Send Your Staff Packing fundraiser | Part of Staff Appreciation Week. Northeast families buy tickets for their favorite staff and faculty to win great prizes. | May or June |
| Silver Graphics Fundraiser | Families can buy their child's artwork transformed into mugs, mousepads, bags, towels and other fun items. | Fall |
| Ski Club | Enjoy winter fun, skiing or snowboarding at Greek Peak. Grades 2-5 are welcome to join ski club. | Winter |
| Staff Appreciation Week | Breakfast, massages, and luncheon to thank our wonderful Northeast faculty and staff for everything they do for our kids. | May or June |
| Staff Luncheon | Thank you luncheon for teachers and staff for all their hard work. | May or June |
| Northeast Yearbook | A lasting reminder of your children's elementary school years. | Distributed at end of year |

Volunteer Opportunities at Northeast Elementary School

| Program | Description | Time of Year |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 5th Grade Camera Club | One or two volunteers needed to supervise camera club. Work with 5 th graders to take pictures of NE and school events to be used in the yearbook. Teach students how to use a camera and work with digital photos. | Throughout year |
| Basketball | In partnership with the Ithaca Youth Bureau, Northeast fields basketball teams for boys and girls in grades 3-5. In addition to the basketball coordinator, the PTA needs coaches for each team. There are one evening practice and one weekend game. | December through February |
| Bike Safety Rodeo | Volunteers needed for 1-2 hour shifts to help students cycle through the course. | June |
| Bike Helmet Sales | One volunteer needed to coordinate sales. | Spring |
| Box Tops | One volunteer needed to coordinate the collection of Box Tops . | Throughout year |
| Business Donations | One volunteer needed to coordinate donation requests from PTA programs and local businesses. | |
| Carnival | Many volunteers are needed to sell tickets, run games, sell food in 1 ½ shifts. Committee volunteers needed to coordinate helpers, get donations, and organize food and games. | June |
| Enrichment | In addition to the co-organizers for enrichment, volunteers are needed to take attendance and make sure all students are picked up by their parents – about 1 hour/week for 6 weeks. | October to June |
| Fall FUNdraiser show | Two volunteers are needed to advertise and sell advance tickets for this event. | Fall |
| Family Portrait Night Fundraiser | One organizer needed to advertise and coordinate appointments. An additional one or two volunteers needed to coordinate picture taking. | Fall |
| Great Escape | Parents are needed to run the concession stands for that one evening. | February or March |
| Halloween Parade | Volunteers needed to supervise parade participants and organize refreshments and activities. | October |
| Ice Skating Club | Volunteers are needed to supervise the students at the rink. | October to April |
| International Night | Committee volunteers needed to coordinate helpers, get donations, and organize food and entertainment. | Early winter |
| Kindergarten meet your teacher day | One parent to needed to coordinate and advertise this event. | August |
| Kindergarten playdates | One parent needed to coordinate and advertise this event. | Summer |
| Membership | Promote membership into the PTA. Responsible for all PTA membership dues and applications. | Throughout year |
| Movie Night | Organizer plans movie nights at Northeast. Volunteers also needed to sell food. | Throughout year |
| NE Credit Union | One or two parents needed to collect deposits for 20 minutes/week before school starts. Need not be every week. | Throughout year |
| NE Link | Solicit items and publish the monthly Northeast newsletter | Throughout year |
| NE Site Council | Attend monthly meetings of the Shared Decision Making Council, which includes parent/guardians, teachers, paraprofessionals and school principal. | Throughout year |
| NE Yahoo Group (Listserv) | One parent needed to enroll new members and act as forum moderator. | All year |
| Nominating Committee | Identify volunteers for different PTA committees | Throughout year |
| Picture Day | One organizer oversees reminder notices and works with the front office to process orders. 6 helpers needed at Picture Day for 2 hour shifts to help the students get ready for their picture. | September and November |
| PTA Council Representatives | Attend monthly meetings of ICSD PTA Council; report back to NE PTA, disseminate relevant information to NE community. | 4-5 meetings a year |
| PTA/Staff Liaison | | Throughout year |
| PTA Website | One volunteer needed to maintain the Northeast PTA website. | Throughout year |
| Scholastic Book Fair Fundraiser | Parents can volunteer in 1 ½ or 2 ¾ hour shifts to help sell books. Committee members plan, set up, and staff the book fair in the fall and the spring. | Fall and Spring |
| School Directory | One volunteer needed to gather and publish contact information for all the students in the school as well as faculty and staff. | September/October |
| Send Your Staff Packing fundraiser | Volunteers needed to solicit donations and organize the sales of the tickets. | May or June |
| Silver Graphics Fundraiser | One organizer needed to collect orders and coordinate with Silver Graphics and the art teacher. | Fall |
| Ski Club | Chaperones are needed | Winter |
| Staff Appreciation Week | Volunteers needed to coordinate events throughout the week. | May or June |
| Staff Luncheon | Helpers needed to set up, serve food, and clean up. | May or June |
| Yearbook | Three or four volunteers needed to take pictures, design the yearbook, and sell the yearbook. | Throughout year |