Your PTO Year-End To Do List

Organize your PTO files and storage.

This is a great time to go through your files and purge unnecessary items. If you store food or soft drinks, check the expiration dates and toss as appropriate. Get rid of mangled decorations, boxes of old school directories, calculators with leaky batteries, posters that announce activities your group hasn’t sponsored in ages, and piles of reports from the fundraising company your PTO used eight years ago. After you clean out the cabinet, file drawers, or closet, write an inventory list of the major items in each place and tape it to the inside of the door or drawer.

Collect login and passwords to electronic resources.

With the growing use of electronic tools, the login’s and passwords will need to passed on to the new board. In many cases, the passwords should be reset. If you have opened a Paypal account linked to an specific parents email address, be sure closed it.

Collect project/committee binders.

To avoid the loss of important PTO project binders in the black holes we call our basements and garages, collect the binders before school lets out. It’s easier to track down the Box Tops chairperson and her files now than it will be in the fall when your new chairperson is trying to get organized.

Encourage year-end assessment of each committee or project.

Ask your committee chairs to complete a year-end assessment for their projects. Have them capture important information such as tips for success, pitfalls to avoid, and email addresses and phone numbers for vendors. Even if a committee chairperson is returning to her position next fall, encourage her to document this year’s event. Better to have it on paper in case her memory fades, her binders are misplaced, she moves out of town, or she decides to give up the job. (Download a PTO committee chair year-end report.)

Summarize accomplishments for the year.

As new board members take on roles and new parents transition into your school, it is helpful to have a quick glance back at the PTO accomplishments for the year. It can be used to prioritize your future efforts for the school as well as document all that you do. Categories to consider noting: Items purchased, Event/Activities hosted, Fundraisers, greatest accomplishments

Verify summer building hours.

Secretaries and principals take summer vacations, too. Be sure you know when the building will be closed over the summer months. You might need access to PTO files, photocopiers, or meeting space inside the school building.

Consider Summer Library hours.

Many schools open their library/media center for summer hours. Consult your principal for summer use guidelines
Gently recruit.

The school year is coming to a close, and most PTOers are ready to take a break from parent group work. But you still need a chairperson for the fall carnival, a team to coordinate the welcome back picnic, and a volunteer to manage October’s Doughnuts With Dad event. You don’t want to start the new school year scrambling to fill those leadership roles. Put out some feelers now to find volunteers for these early PTO activities. That way, when you make those important recruitment phone calls in late summer, people won’t be completely surprised by your request.

Review financial files for “retention”

When doing PTO spring cleaning, be more careful with your financial files. You can’t just throw away old stuff; the IRS dictates record-retention rules to ensure that there is adequate access to the group’s financial history. Even if your PTO isn’t a registered 501(c)(3) organization, it’s still good practice to follow the IRS’s record-keeping rules. Financial records like bank statements and check registers should be kept for seven years. Your monthly treasurer reports should be kept for three. And some records, like your meeting minutes and agendas, year-end treasurer reports, and audit results should be kept permanently. (Get a detailed list of which PTO records to keep and for how long.)

Set up a fresh display in the lobby.

You and the students may be gone for the summer, but it’s likely that new families will be visiting the school to enroll for next year. Take some time to update your PTO’s bulletin boards and display cases, especially those in the school lobby. A nice “Welcome to ABC Elementary and our PTO” greeting sends a much more inviting message than a faded display with the minutes of last May’s PTO meeting.

Change signers on the PTO bank account.

If you have had a change in PTO leadership, be sure to change the authorized signers on your PTO’s bank account. Many banks require both the new signers and the retiring ones to show up in person, so it’s a bit more complicated than it might sound. Find out what your bank requires, then take the appropriate steps to update the signature cards before school lets out. It’s far easier to find the outgoing vice president today than in July when she’s splashing at the pool with her kids.

Change the mailing address on the PTO bank statement.

If your PTO’s bank statements are mailed to the school, consider changing the mailing address for the summer months. You don’t want to miss important correspondence—like a notice of a bounced deposited check—because your treasurer can’t get inside the school building to collect the mail. Consider sending the bank mail to a PTO officer who is not a signer on the checking account. It’s always good practice for someone else to open and review the monthly statement first, then pass it along to the treasurer for reconciliation.
Renew incorporation.

If your PTO is incorporated, double-check to see when you must renew. Although the rules vary from state to state, it’s likely that your PTO, if it is a corporation, will need to renew its incorporation status each year. Check with your state’s corporations office to verify the deadline for your PTO’s annual renewal. The form might be due over the summer.

Pass on the final copy of your Bylaws.

If you have organized your group with formal bylaws (very good idea), be sure the next group of leaders has the most recently approved document.

Acknowledge retiring staff members.

Celebrate the service of any staff member who will be retiring at the end of the school year. Don’t forget the support employees, too, such as custodians and cafeteria workers. The students (and parents) probably know that their favorite 3rd grade teacher is retiring. But so, too, is the custodian who set up hundreds of chairs for PTO events, the cafeteria supervisor who opened the kitchen for the PTO’s chili cook-off, and the district’s truck driver who carted tables from other schools so your PTO would have enough display space for the big community garage sale. Find out who is retiring and thank them appropriately before they’re gone.

Set up a room reservation form for fall.

Some schools require that the PTO file a reservation form to secure space for meetings or events held in the school building. This is an important task that can be easily overlooked in the chaos of the first few weeks of the new school year. Find out now whether your school requires such a form and get a blank copy for your files. Add a reminder to your personal calendar to alert you to complete the form once you set your fall calendar. If possible, go ahead and set next year’s PTO meeting and event schedule now, and file the form with that information. (Refer to LPS Archibus Room Reservation instructions here: Archibus.)

Get summer vacation and travel plans from fellow officers.

As the summer winds down, you’ll want to get together with the rest of the executive board to start planning for fall. Find out who will be traveling or otherwise preoccupied so you can schedule PTO business accordingly. Some folks might relocate for the summer, some might stop checking email, and some might take on a summer job that affects their availability for PTO work.

Arrange for your PTO’s annual financial review.

It’s an excellent business practice for your PTO to have an independent review of its financial files every year. Some refer to this as an "audit" (though that term can have technical and legal implications beyond the scope of a PTO review). Because PTO financial activity essentially stops during the summer and it’s usually the end of the group’s fiscal year,
most groups have their books reviewed then. However, you will want to secure a volunteer “auditor” now, before school lets out, while you still have easy access to your parent community at large. It’s likely that a well-crafted email or flyer will attract a qualified volunteer to conduct your review. Even if your PTO chooses to hire a professional to review the books, get that set up now. Summer has a way of shifting our priorities from school to home.

**Set up a preliminary budget for next year.**

Right now, while this year’s PTO activities are still fresh in your mind, is a great time to sketch out next year’s preliminary budget. Consider the planned and actual income and expenditures for this year and adjust accordingly. Later on, your treasurer and executive board will fine-tune the draft budget to match the PTO’s firm plan.