

Washington State PTA (WSPTA) and National PTA both recognize that negotiations between local school districts and education associations can sometimes reach an impasse, and teachers and/or other support professionals may engage in work stoppages. It is the position of PTA that disruption to the educational system in the form of work stoppages and/or strikes is often detrimental to the best interest of the children and families affected by those actions.^{1, 2}

WSPTA advocates for the well-being and education of each child. During work stoppages, students lose learning opportunities. Parents often must decide between losing income due to taking days off from work or leaving their children home alone. Children who rely on free or reduced-priced meals may go without needed nutrition – sometimes those school meals are their ONLY meal of the day.

WSPTA and National PTA recommend² their constituent PTAs and councils remain neutral during collective bargaining, presenting both sides factually, and to not use PTA funds or volunteers to man classrooms during a work stoppage. Local PTAs and councils can play a role during negotiations, as well as during and after work stoppages.

Local PTAs and councils can:

- 1) Understand the issues in dispute, and the relevant laws, and communicate them to members. Be a good resource for families.
- 2) Encourage full public airing of the issues. The purpose of these discussions is to dispel confusion and develop intelligent, informed public opinion. If a strong majority opinion develops regarding an issue that affects children, the PTA has a responsibility to bring this to the attention of the negotiating parties. PTAs should be keenly aware that the decisions made in negotiations often have much more of an impact upon the welfare of children than to temporary closing of the school and other disruptive action.
- 3) If a work stoppage or strike occurs, urge immediate and continuous negotiations, and if necessary mediation, to get schools open as soon as possible. If negotiation is delayed, the PTA should seek to bring the school board representatives and teachers' organization representatives together.
- 4) Serve as an open forum to inform the public on the points of disagreements and the progress of negotiations.
- 5) Suggest and urge appropriate action by parents, community agencies, and volunteer groups that will protect children during the period the school is closed. Suggested activities include:
 - Providing childcare or study groups for families with inflexible work schedules.
 - Providing meals for children who rely on the breakfasts and lunches served at school.

- 6) After negotiations conclude, PTAs can remain a valuable resource to the community by:
- Communicating the resolution of the disputed issues.
 - Working for community understanding and support of school needs.
 - Through informed public opinion, seeing that the negotiated agreements, which settled the strike, are faithfully implemented.
 - Planning activities that will restore harmony, promote teacher morale, and renew parent-teacher dialogue.

Citations

1. WSPTA RESOLUTION

18.6 Uninterrupted Operation Of Public Schools

Resolution passed 1986; revised 2006

Whereas, the Washington State PTA has purposes to “promote the collaboration and engagement of families and educators in the education of children and youth;” and to “engage the public in united efforts to secure the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being of all children and youth;” and

Whereas, quality education is a high priority issue for the Washington State PTA, and

Whereas, Washington State citizens have historically valued the reliable delivery of vital services and the orderly management of public institutions including fire and police services and public schools, and

Whereas, the Washington State PTA believes that a disruption to the educational system in the form of work stoppages and/or strikes is often detrimental to the best interest of the children and families affected by those actions, while also acknowledging that more state resources must be committed to the educational process in the State of Washington, including higher salaries for educational employees.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Washington State PTA shall work to produce conditions with regard to the collective bargaining process which will consistently produce, in a timely manner, labor agreements negotiated and fully embraced by the direct parties thereto and which will not cause disruption to the school calendar; and be it further

Resolved, that the Washington State PTA will not support work stoppages and/or strikes which interrupt or disrupt the educational day.

2. National PTA Position Statement on Teacher Negotiations, Sanctions and Strikes

<https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/ptas-positions/Individual-Position-Statements/Position-Statement-Teacher-Negotiations-Sanctions-and-Strikes>