

(Box 34) 86 FSS, Unit 3221, APO, AE 09094-3221 • <http://EuropeanPTAOnline.org>

Dear DoDEA Schools in Europe,

We are often asked, "Why should my school be a PTA? If we are affiliated with another parent group, we can keep all of our membership dues. What does being a PTA do for my school?" While we can understand the desire to keep money close to home, we strongly advocate for being a part of a bigger picture.

There are many benefits to being a PTA, but we believe that the most important thing that PTA stands for is advocacy. National PTA has [a rich history](#) as the nation's oldest and largest child advocacy organization. For over 100 years, National PTA has established programs and called for legislation that improves our children's lives, such as creation of Kindergarten classes, child labor laws, public health service, hot and healthy lunch programs, a juvenile justice system, mandatory immunization, arts in education, and school safety. Our mission is to help make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Over the past 58 years, the European Congress of the National PTA has advocated for school nurses in every school, regardless of the size. We also advocated to bring the federal hot lunch program to DoDDS schools. (At one point, there was no lunch program in DoDDS schools. Kids who rode buses to school brought cold lunches, and walkers went home for lunch.) EPTA advocated for anti-bullying programs in our schools and, more recently, we've successfully advocated for improvements to our schools' cleaning contracts after recent, drastic cuts that threatened our students' and staff's health and well-being. These are just a few of the differences that we have made, and we continue to work for positive change. Most other parent groups are just about raising funds, not about advocating for change!

EPTA also works along with National PTA to advocate for our military kids. As part of the [National PTA Military Alliance for Parents and Partners](#) (MAPP), PTA has worked to successfully support legislation like the [Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#), which was recently adopted by all 50 states to help to ease educational transition issues for children of military families.

Our Local Units are not alone in their efforts to advocate for our kids! In order to support our Local Units and set them up for success, EPTA provides in-person training to our local leaders two times a year: Fall training and Spring Convention. These training events give our Local Units a valuable opportunity to network with other Local Units, to share expenses of performers, and to get training on working with your Private Organizations and running your Local Unit. Throughout the year, we stand ready to assist our Local Units with any questions or issues that arise, and help is only an [email](#) or a phone call away!

National PTA also offers an extensive library of online training materials to its members in a variety of subjects that can benefit both Local Unit board members and our membership at large. For more information on PTA training and opportunities, visit the National PTA's website at <http://PTA.org>, the European PTA's website at <http://EuropeanPTAOnline.org>, and the EPTA Facebook page at <http://Facebook.com/EuropeanPTA> to see the wealth of valuable information that is available to PTA Local Units and members, as well as a variety of [PTA Member Benefits!](#)

PTAs in good standing can take part in National PTA programs such as: the [National PTA Reflections Arts Program](#), [Take your Family to School Week](#), [PTA Healthy Lifestyles programs](#), the [Family Reading Experience](#) program, and the [National PTA School of Excellence Program](#), which builds partnerships between PTAs, schools, and communities based on PTA's [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#) and drives family engagement. National PTA also offers a number of grant opportunities that can bring much-needed funding to your school for events and educational activities. Thousands of dollars in grant money have gone to DoDEA-Europe PTAs in recent years!

At the 'state' level, European PTA sponsors our participation in the Scripps National Spelling Bee, which is free to units in good standing (other parent groups pay \$350 to participate). EPTA also offers several [scholarships](#) annually to high school seniors at DoDEA schools, as well as [awards](#) to recognize our volunteers, teachers, and Local Units for their hard work and their efforts to help make every child's potential a reality.

Where else can you belong to a state and national organization for \$3.75 a year and have them advocate on the behalf of all children? Each year, EPTA advocates have the opportunity to attend the National PTA Legislative Convention in Washington, DC. It is amazing to see all of the state leaders of PTA march on Washington on behalf of our kids! During our visit, representatives from EPTA visit with members of Congress as well as with the leadership at DoDEA Headquarters, bringing information on current legislative concerns and issues that impact our community to those who have the power to make change. The legislative team at National PTA has also been very active on our behalf, spotlighting EPTA-specific legislation, and they're even working to get language included in an appropriations bill to increase PTA privileges on military bases, similar to those granted to the Boy Scouts of America.

It costs money to advocate on the state and national level, and your membership dollars support PTA advocacy and PTA programs that can greatly enrich your school and community. As you consider the decision between PTA and other parent groups, we hope that you will look at the bigger picture and consider not just your local school's needs, but the needs of all children. Today's DoDEA students in Europe will probably be moving on to a school in the United States (or several schools) at some point in their K-12 education. This makes it especially important that we advocate for ALL children, to ensure that our military kids are set up for success when they move on to their next home station. Help us to help make their potential a reality - maintain your PTA status or become a PTA. We are here to help you succeed!

**QUESTIONS?** Please feel free to reach out to us at any time via email at [Office@EuropeanPTAOnline.org](mailto:Office@EuropeanPTAOnline.org).

