What is a PTA, PTO, and Booster Club?

Let's start by defining the purpose of these three types of parent-teacher groups. A PTA and a PTO are organized groups composed of parents, teachers, and school staff devoted to the education and development of the school's students. However, as an affiliate of The National PTA, a school's **PTA's mission** is already created, and that is "to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children." If your school has a PTO or Booster Club instead of a PTA, the missions will vary widely from group to group.

Now the purpose of a Booster Club is similar in spirit. However, it specifically wants to offer financial support for specific programs not covered by the school's budget; this includes raising funds for equipment for specified programs and clubs, such as athletics, band and music, fine arts, and more.

What Is the Difference Between a PTA and a PTO?

While parent-teacher groups such as PTAs and PTOs appear to be very similar, the real difference comes from organizational affiliations. The "A" in PTA stands for "association," as a PTA is a formal part of The National Parent Teacher Association. A school's PTA is part of the **state PTA**, which is also part of the National PTA, paying membership dues to both national and state organizations and abiding by the rules of each keep associated with this network. In return for following guidelines, The National PTA provides **resources** for family engagement programs, fundraising, training, access to program grants, and more. They also give a voice to PTA's concerns on a larger scale.

A PTO, on the other hand, is considered an independent organization. Not having to follow another organization's rules, PTOs can choose whether or not they'd like to implement membership dues. If they decide to enforce dues, this money will go directly into the PTO's finances rather than a larger association. Still, it is entirely up to the members and directors of the organization to do so.

What Is the Difference Between a PTO and a Booster Club?

We already know a PTO is an independent organization, but a Booster Club is too.

While a PTO works to better the student experience of a school as a whole, a Booster Club often only focuses on raising funds in support of one specific school program rather than trying to fulfill schoolwide needs. This isn't to say that a Booster Club absolutely cannot raise funds for more than one program, but more often than not, their dedication is to boosting only one club.

Another difference between these two organizations is the background of the members that make it up. Since a PTO usually raises funds and holds events for the majority of the student body, members and volunteers will likely include a diverse number of parents, teachers, and school staff. And while members of a Booster Club can also highly vary, the group will be mainly

composed of the parents of the students participating in that particular program. This is why there can be more than one Booster Club at a school while there is only one PTA or PTO.

PTA, PTO, and Booster Club Internal Structures

Another difference between a PTA, PTO, and Booster Club is the internal structures on which they are based. Most of these organizations follow pre-existing bylaws; however, a PTA will likely have stricter bylaws and regulations to comply with state and national standards.

PTAs, PTOs, and Booster Clubs often have similar internal structures with officers, boards, and committees. They often use a parliamentary process to make changes and decisions and vote in a President, Vice President, and Treasurer.

In these organizations, the president prepares an agenda for and presides over executive board and membership meetings. However, because of the vast network, a PTA president must additionally act as a liaison between national, state, and local PTA's.

Parent-Teacher Group Similarities

There are undoubtedly many differences between PTAs, PTOs, and Booster Clubs, and the differences can become even greater when comparing individual groups to one another. However, the similarities come about when you look at the shared desire these members and volunteers have; to better the community by enhancing a student's school experience. To do so, these groups will also take on similar responsibilities such as fundraising, purchasing much-needed equipment, and volunteering time to accomplish goals.

Whichever group you decide to join, we commend you for taking part in your child's education and undoubtedly enriching the lives of many students along the way.

Reference: Team, A. I. M. "What's the Difference between a PTA, PTO, and Booster Club?" *AIM*, 26 May 2021, https://aim-companies.com/difference-between-pta-pto-booster-club/.