

Frequently Asked Questions

Outside Speakers for PTO/PTSO Groups:

The PTO Council is committed to involving parents to help teachers in our schools deliver the most effective education for our children, and supporting our PTO/PTSOs in their efforts to do so. We carefully review each request and proposal from outside parties against this core value and PTO Council's available resources when considering outside speakers.

Please consider these criteria, in response to recently asked questions, regarding requests from outside entities to speak at your PTO meetings.

There are two types of “outside speakers” who may be interested in addressing your group: those *you* seek to address your group on an informative topic, and those *who request* to speak to your group about their topic. A few considerations regarding the source of a request and the topic will be useful.

Q. Is the topic relevant to our PTO/PTSO and its mission?

Any group addressing your PTO or PTSO should be aware of the mission of your group. If not, the materials they present may not be pertinent to your group.

• Is the topic or issue appropriate for parent influence or action, and the age-level of the school students?

• Is the source of information unbiased? Is the information accurate and verifiable with references?

A printed handout with these details would be most useful for your audience, with contact information from the presenting group. Topics addressed should not be religious or politically partisan in nature.

Q. Can parents make a decision on the topic independent of the presenter, with the information provided?

• Is there educational outcome data to support the topic, method or issue?

• Does the speaker come upon recommendation from anyone within your group, or from a colleague at a similar type of group? Is the speaker from a group you are not familiar with?

Keep the priorities of your group in mind as you decide which speakers to permit to address your group. Also keep in mind that you are setting precedent if you allow one outside entity to address your group; others may seek similar access.

The PTO Council advises against allowing outside entities to lobby your PTO/PTSO to represent their interests. A business asking your students to solicit customers for them, in the guise of a “fundraising effort”, is not an appropriate choice.

It is also not appropriate for a PTO to take a stand between a union and the entity with which it is in negotiations. A school employee working in your building, asking to speak at your meeting may have pertinent information for your group. A union representative with no relation to your building and PTO/PTSO may not be an appropriate choice to present at your meeting.

In regard to the proposals from custodial workers and bus drivers to address assembled groups, the PTO Council currently has no official position on privatization of these sectors. PTO Council member-PTOs are free to discuss and take positions as private individuals.