

PTA Opinion Survey Results April 2009

These statements are based on 95 responses received from Harmony parents and teachers. It is a sampling and may not reflect the feelings of all parents and/or teachers.

- Almost 3/4 of Harmony families have only one child attending Harmony (74%).
 - Most families only have children in the 5th grade or younger (60%).
 - Many families have children in Pre-Kindergarten or younger (43%).
 - Harmony is the only Elementary school most families have attended (60%).
 - Almost 3/4 of Harmony families have only attended Gwinnett County schools (73%).
 - Almost all parents work full-time (56%) or part-time (23%) – 79% total.
 - A little over half of Harmony families joined PTA this year (58%).
 - Most Harmony families prefer to attend evening school functions (60%).
 - A little over half of Harmony families have children that are heavily involved in sports (52%).
 - Most Harmony families attended Curriculum Night last August (76%).
 - Most Harmony families attended Open House last August (81%).
 - Almost 2/3 of Harmony families attended the Fall Festival (64%).
 - A little over half of Harmony families attended one Thursday evening PTA meeting this year (51%).
 - Only a few attended the Principal's Learn and Lunch series this year (4%).
 - A little over 1/3 of Harmony families attended the Family Learning Night last fall (37%).
 - Most of Harmony families purchased a yearbook this year (76%).
 - Most of Harmony families shared their email address with the school or PTA this year (81%).
 - Almost half of Harmony families helped in a classroom this year (46%).
 - Only a few help with Junior Achievement or the Reading Buddy program (9%).
 - Almost half of Harmony families volunteered at school this year (46%).
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- 86% agree or strongly agree that they know what PTA is and does at Harmony.
 - 85% agree or strongly agree that PTA is a strong positive force in Harmony.
 - 88% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors the yearbook.
 - 89% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors the Fall Festival.
 - 81% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors Bingo.
 - 80% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors Movie Nights.
 - 78% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors Spirit Nights.
 - 94% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors and supports Community of Readers.
 - 78% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors Skate Nights.
 - 86% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors Science Force.
 - 83% agree or strongly agree that they like that PTA sponsors and supports Family Learning Night.
 - 75% agree or strongly agree that they like or would like to receive PTA event notifications via email.
 - 75% agree or strongly agree that they like or would like to receive the PTA newsletter via email.
 - 45% agree or strongly agree that they would like to volunteer – 32% have no opinion.
 - 75% agree or strongly agree that they understand what volunteer opportunities are available in the classrooms.
 - 69% agree or strongly agree that they understand what volunteer opportunities are available outside the classrooms – 35% have no opinion.
 - 60% agree or strongly agree that they feel they can approach PTA with issues or concerns – 21% have no opinion.
 - 54% agree or strongly agree that they like the FunRun as our fundraiser – 20% have no opinion, and 26% disagree or strongly disagree.
 - 26% agree or strongly agree that they would like more but smaller fundraisers – 28% have no opinion.

Comments – we have tried to clarify and/or address any concerns or issues raised by the comment section.

Survey Comments	PTA Responses
<p>Even though the Fun Run is a great fundraiser that the kids enjoy and get a lot out of, I feel that the sponsors are getting nothing out of it. We need a fundraiser where people can give something back to the people who are generously donating their money. Also, the Fun Run always seems to land on a very cold day for the kids to be running around outside for so long. I don't think we should have several fundraisers, because parents and donators get frustrated that they have to dish out money every time they turn around. We do need maybe one or two very good fundraisers.</p>	<p>PTA used to have a fundraiser that sold items but children often had to carry large and/or heavy objects home. We had many complaints that the items were not worth the money and decided to try the Fun Run as a different fundraising option for the last two years. Also, the FunRun promotes a healthy aspect to the traditional fundraiser. The donators don't receive goods but most students love participating in the run.</p>
<p>Maybe we can do a fall festival and a spring festival. Just trying to put some ideas out there. I know it all takes a lot of effort and time. Wish I could come up with a better idea, I will keep thinking about it.</p>	<p>Fall Festival is not a fundraiser - it is a FREE event for all Harmony students. We do usually have a cake walk, food items, and a basket raffle which raise monies for specific projects. For every fundraiser PTA hosts, we are also required to have a FREE event. Unlike most area schools, PTA offers two FREE events to our students - Fall Festival and Bingo.</p>
<p>Not everyone can skate (not real supportive of skate night)</p>	<p>Skate Night is usually attended by more of the older students, but plenty of younger students and even siblings attend, too. PTA tried a new "Night" this year with Gymnastix Training Center's Parent's Night Out – our hope was to have an alternative to Skate Night but unfortunately, there was very little participation.</p>
<p>Have some options like baking, turning in colored paper, pens, markers, etc. for parents who work during the day and can't volunteer. At least we would feel like we contributed also in making it happen.</p>	<p>Donations are always welcome at the school. You may donate items to your child's classroom or to PTA.</p>
<p>Family Learning Nights are great - keep them going.</p>	<p>Family Learning Nights are a school sponsored event that PTA assists with financially.</p>
<p>Great job!!!</p>	
<p>Don't know who I could approach in PTA with issues or concerns.</p>	<p>The PTA contacts are listed on the PTA website - it is a link from the Harmony home page. At least 4 times a year, a PTA newsletter is sent home to all students - it contains contact information for PTA Executive Board members.</p>
<p>I continue to be concerned about safety in Harmony - why are all doors not locked, why is there not a "presence" in the halls?</p>	<p>PTA and the school would love to have more volunteers that could "man" a desk at the front of the school and be able to have volunteers walking the grounds to establish a "presence". Only 3 sets of doors remain unlocked throughout the day to allow students and teachers safe passage to and from the gym and playground. Federal and State funding is not available to supply a "presence" at a school unless there is some sort of risk or need. Many schools in our area have a "Visibility" team that is supported by volunteers.</p>
<p>I would rather donate money instead of having fundraisers.</p>	<p>Our PTA form (where you can join PTA or buy a yearbook) also has a space where you can donate money to PTA.</p>

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I try to help in the classroom but seem to have difficulty communicating with the teacher - somehow I get the feeling that I am not really wanted in the classroom.	All teachers should be open to parents helping in the classrooms. Speak with your room mom, the school administration, or PTA. Your desire to help in a classroom is your right as a parent and you should never feel unwanted.
Why did my child have HOURS of homework at the beginning of the year and virtually none since January - is there an instructional calendar?	Homework is assigned at the discretion of the teacher. If you have concerns about homework amounts, you should address them with your teacher or the school administration.
Why all the testing? What are the benchmarks and do they help?	Benchmark testing started this year in all Gwinnett County Schools. It is to be used at the beginning and ending of sessions to help the teachers gage whether their students are learning. Other types of testing are used to compare our students within the state (CRCT) and nationally (ITBS and CogAT).
I do support PTA 100% - thanks for all that you do.	
Learning is my most valued objective for my child, and I believe Harmony strives for excellence in that area. Please don't sacrifice learning to too many "activities." I like it the way it is.	PTA tries to be supportive of all educational activities while also providing some fun ones, too. Four things are considered when determining how to spend PTA funds: Will it be educational? Will it impact all or most students? Will the students enjoy it? Is it a short or long-term program?
Sorry, don't know anything about the Fun Run.	Remember to check your child's backpack and folders for information from the school and PTA - it is one of our primary ways of communicating with parents.
More field trips needed especially for Kindergarten.	Field trips are a decision that is made by the school administration and not PTA. In general, each grade may do one field trip per school year. PTA does often help fund field trips for students whose families may not be able to afford the cost.
I would like to ask for more introduction or events or activities that classes have. Some parents are new to many/some events and don't really know about or are familiar with.	The PTA tries to communicate with parents through newsletters and emails. It is the best way to keep parents informed of PTA and school happenings. Please log on to the school website: www.harmonywildcats.org and sign up to receive school notifications via email. You can also join PTA and receive email notifications from us if you supply us with your email address.
Can parents get opportunity of helping with classrooms?	The school encourages parent involvement in the classrooms! Your primary contact for classroom involvement should be the teacher or your room parent.
Should have tests at least twice a year from grades 2nd through 12th. Annual test should cover entire years or at least semesters learning. Any grade should not go without annual testing.	The first PTA newsletter this year had a great article on testing in Gwinnett County. Gwinnett participates in state and federal testing and also has its own benchmark testing that started this year. Many of the issues raised in these comments are for the school administration and not PTA.
Teachers need to work hard and teach strictly from Pre-K. Make aware all students about education importance and compete them with international levels.	Harmony teachers work very hard to educate our children. The PTA also supports teachers by financially assisting with continuing education courses and training.

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Thank you for giving me a chance to write these notes.	
Teach students more in class so they can have less (stress) for homework. Give them some homework for something to do during Spring breaks, fall breaks, winter breaks and projects and reading for summer vacations.	
I have not been as involved as I have in the past and plan to change that with the next school year. I love the emails that are sent out. It helps so much.	
I have no thoughts, as this is my child's last year in Harmony Elementary. Thanks you to the PTA for providing so many wonderful events and assets to our children and school!	
I like the fundraisers where friends and family purchase things and don't just give money. My son does love the PTA.	
I love our PTA!!!! Great job! I REALLY appreciate everything that you do.	
Thank you for all your hard work!	
<p>Don't waste money on things like the Boosterthon. How much money was wasted on paying them? Come up with better fundraising ideas. It is a money making scheme and they make a lot from it. Smaller fundraisers with less expense are more fruitful.</p>	<p>Most fundraising options do cost money. It is not unusual for the fundraising company to receive up to 50% of the income from a fundraiser. With limited volunteers, Harmony's PTA needs to "pay" someone to help us raise funds each year. It is an unfortunate reality. Patrick Elementary PTA recently hosted their own "Fun Run" and was very successful - they had lots of volunteers and lots of prize donations. Ivy Creek Elementary PTA tried the same thing and was not very successful. Harmony PTA WELCOMES any help in its fundraising efforts - the Fundraising Committee Chair position is OPEN for interested candidates!</p>
I think its great that the Fun Run is our fundraiser. I don't like begging friends and family many times a year with many fundraisers.	PTA finds it easier to manage one large fundraiser each year versus many smaller fundraisers.
I would like that the PTA works harder in Harmony Elementary school so it helps a lot with students.	PTA works hard to raise funds so that we can support programs like: Community of Readers, Science Lab, students in need, books, field trips, and more. We strive to support at least one large item in each grade that impacts all students, as well as items for specials that impact all students.
I would like the opportunity to spend personal funds and to be reimbursed for supplies as we had been in years past. (from a teacher)	In past years, PTA gave every classroom teacher at Harmony was given \$100 to spend on supplies. This school year we did not distribute these monies because many teachers were not using it.
My child is in a special needs class. I didn't see or maybe didn't realize what kind of support the PTA gives to these children. They really need some more ___ resources, ____, etc. Please let me know if this is already being done by the PTA.	PTA supports all children at Harmony through the classrooms and special areas (Art, Math, PE, Music, and Technology). Extra Fun Run monies are given to specials teachers and the special needs classes.
Overall it appears the PTA does a great job. I love the projectors in the classroom.	The projectors in the classrooms were a retrofit of technology for Harmony that was implemented by the administration.

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<p>We love what the PTA is doing for Harmony. However, it would be great if some of the family events were held on the weekends. Because of our hectic schedules, we have been unable to attend the events through the week.</p>	<p>PTA does offer a few events on weekends (ex.: Family Movie Night, Family Bingo Night, and Fall Festival) but many events that involve teachers (Open House, Curriculum Night) are not held on weekends. All PTA meetings for Elementary Schools in Gwinnett County are scheduled by the GCPS for Thursday nights.</p>
<p>The FunRun is TOOOO MUCH! You pay a lot of money and get nothing in return. It's really a HUGE donation to put on parents and friends. The propoganda to the kids is a bit much as well. Perhaps another type of fundraiser that has something tangible. I'd be more willing, as well as our relatives, to support my child in that type of effort.</p>	<p>PTA used to have a fundraiser that sold items but children often had to carry large and/or heavy objects home. We had many complaints that the items were not worth the money and decided to try the Fun Run as a different fundraising option for the last two years. Also, the FunRun promotes a healthy aspect to the traditional fundraiser. The donators don't receive goods but most students love participating in the run.</p>
<p>PTA does a great job!! I have been a room parent and I wish more parents would help out. It always seems there are only a few parents in each class to do all the work! Thanks to the PTA for all your hard work!</p>	
<p>Thanks for all you do!</p>	
<p>I really enjoyed the PTA sponsored family movie nights. I was looking forward to bringing my 1st grader and 4 year old to the most recent one. I was disappointed that it was cancelled! Why was it cancelled?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, the most recent Movie Night was cancelled due to lack of volunteers.</p>
<p>I also really enjoy the PTA sponsored family bingo night!</p>	
<p>The fall festival is wonderful! I think Harmony should strive to keep this one!</p>	
<p>I am not really thrilled that the FunRun is the main (other than the fall festival) fundraiser event. I think it is a wonderful way for the kids to be involved, however, the prizes are cheap and the amount of money required to be raised for any decent prizes is way too much!</p>	<p>Patrick Elementary hosted their own FunRun. They had parents donate the prizes and MANY volunteers.</p>
<p>I think that the Harmony PTA is awesome! Everyone truly enjoys their job there and does an outstanding job! I work full-time outside the home and do not have any extra time to volunteer. I thank all the mom's who do such a wonderful job making Harmony PTA the best!</p>	
<p>Harmony should think of more creative ways to recruit volunteers, specifically parents. Perhaps each parent should be specifically asked to volunteer one time during the year, even if it is only a very minor commitment such as helping children at lunch to open containers, assisting in Science Force or other.</p>	<p>PTA, for the first time this year, tried to use email as a way to inform parents of happenings and to ask for volunteers. PTA also has a Volunteer Coordinator position that has been extremely helpful in coordinating help for events such as Fall Festival.</p>
<p>I feel the PTA did a great job this school year overall. A few suggestions for improvements: events need to start ON TIME - it looks disorganized when people are standing around and things aren't ready.</p>	<p>PTA tries to be organized and to start events on time – we will try even harder next year.</p>

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<p>Flyers/info need to go home with students in plenty of time - not the week of the event (not enough time to plan = low participation)</p>	<p>PTA tries to have flyers included in the Friday folders the week before the event. We also have tried (new this year) to send out a list of upcoming events via email each month. Our hope is to be more "green" and save money on paper by having every parent's email.</p>
<p>Thank you to ALL who volunteer their time!</p>	
<p>We don't care for the FunRun. I know my child dreads it - and I don't like that most of my \$ does not go to the school.</p>	<p>The FunRun is a PTA fundraiser and most of your money does go to PTA. PTA did use a company to help us organize the FunRun this year – they provide flyers, copying, documents, prizes, CD's, T-shirts, pep rally, and event coordination for their percentage.</p>
<p>I really wish I could attend more functions, but I work in a school and for me to get away for a few minutes, you have to have 4 weeks notice, basically it is very difficult. Unfortunately, in this day and age I am just happy to have work so we can keep a roof over our heads.</p>	
<p>I am very pleased with all the many ways that this year's PTA board has served Harmony - an amazing group of hard-working, big-hearted volunteers! Thank you! Thank you!</p>	
<p>Has the FunRun raised as much money as previous fundraisers?</p>	<p>The PTA's first FunRun was very successful – just as successful as other types of fundraisers. Typically, Boosterthon experiences increases in fundraising in 2nd and 3rd years, but this was not the case for us. We actually made approximately ½ of what we expected with this year's FunRun. At this point, we are unsure if it is economic conditions or the FunRun itself.</p>
<p>The fundraisers would be more successful if there were more small fundraisers. The wrapping paper has been a family favorite for many years; it would be great to see a Harmony wrapping paper fundraiser!</p>	
<p>I would just like to say that my child was very excited about the science force. He came home from school and demonstrated his project. I was so proud of him for taking interest in a science related project. Please incorporate more activities such as these. The simple gesture of providing those kids with a small toy really made a difference! I am hoping to get more involved next year. Please work on providing tutoring for after school at a reasonable cost for parents or an after school program to assist the kids with homework and standardized testing year round. I believe this is something all kids could benefit from and parents would be willing to assist with the tutoring one of the nights and/or several days. Thanks for all you do!</p>	<p>While the Science Force is an excellent program that PTA is organizing, it may not be the source of your child's "toy" they brought home. There have been some on-site field trips put on by Mad Science that have been wonderful. Science Force is a group of parent volunteers that assist Harmony staff in teaching science to 2nd through 5th grades (we hope to add K and 1st next year). The volunteers set up experiments and hands on activities that teacher don't have time or space to do, then they facilitate the lab with the assistance of the teacher. It has been a very successful project that the students seem to really enjoy.</p>
<p>Is there childcare provided during PTA meetings? If not, could that be something we could try? This may boost attendance. Could be staffed by a parent volunteer or a teacher.</p>	<p>Most PTA General meetings (the ones on Thursday evenings) have about a 15 minute business meeting followed by a grade level performance. We don't have plans at this time to provide childcare at these events because children (even younger siblings) are encouraged to attend.</p>

Survey Comments	PTA Responses
I love skate night as a way to raise money! Fun for the whole family!	
We appreciate what you all are doing!	