

Pointers for the Perplexed PTOC Representative

Welcome, or welcome back, to the Ann Arbor Public Schools PTO Council!

What is PTOC?

The PTO Council is an umbrella organization for all PTOs and PTSOs in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. The Council is made up of representatives of all PTOs with every school receiving an equal vote on PTOC business regardless of size. PTOC is organized as an independent non-profit entity, a tax-exempt “social welfare” organization under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. (This differs from PTOs, which are usually organized as 501(c)(3) public charities.)

Why PTOC?

Unlike schools that are organized as part of the national PTA, PTOs are totally independent and manage their own affairs. But in a community with over 30 school buildings, AAPS parents needed a way to communicate with each other, ask for advice and help, and to deal with issues of common concern. So, PTOC was born. We are an important part of the whole “parent involvement” piece which is so crucial for a quality education.

PTOC:

- offers training and support to member PTOs, as well as a forum for parent leaders to share ideas and best practices;
- brings the concerns of the parent community directly to top district officials;
- keeps member PTOs and parent communities informed about district-wide issues, policies or events that concern all AAPS parents (as well as state or Federal policies which affect our schools).
- is able to advocate for schools and parents on policy issues, legislation, and ballot proposals that impact our schools (because of our 501c4 status).

So what does it mean to be a PTOC Rep?

Serving your local PTO as their representative to PTO Council means:

- 1) You are the main channel for your PTO to bring up concerns, ask questions, and to reach out to other AAPS parent communities.
- 2) You speak and act for your PTO as the Council considers actions, takes positions, and prepares its strategy for consulting with top district leadership.
- 3) You also bring the “big picture” back to your local PTO – pass along information, explain district-wide issues, discuss PTOC actions and positions, and generally keep your PTO and its officers fully informed about what is happening at the district level.

OK, but what does that mean I have to do?

Attend the meetings – First off, it's important to attend the PTOC meetings. That's where we take care of our business, and more importantly, each meeting is usually organized around a topic that's relevant to all parents. Second, be at your local PTO meetings if at all possible. You represent them, so you need to be available to your members. Ask your officers for 5 minutes to bring everybody up to speed on what you learned from a PTOC meeting, key issues facing our schools, and answers to questions you brought to PTOC. Start out the year by explaining what the PTOC is and does!

Communicate – Make yourself part of your PTO's regular communication with parents. Ask your newsletter editor to give you space each month for a blurb about PTOC activities and to invite interested parents to upcoming meetings of interest. We're building a system to give every Representative a pre-written paragraph, which can get you started.

Participate – As your PTO's representative, you help run PTOC. We're not a lecture club. In recent years, PTOC has not only become much more active but has also gained much more visibility in the community. Top district officials regularly attend and present at our monthly meetings. PTOC officers give regular reports at school board meetings, and PTOC leaders meet regularly with the Superintendent in off-the-record conversations that cover key issues and parent concerns. We play an important role in shaping district policy. But our effectiveness, and our credibility, depends on how well we really represent Ann Arbor parents. That's where you come in!

Welcome Aboard!