

# Tips for the Thwarted

The path of a PTOC Representative does not always run smooth. Here are some issues other Reps have faced, and advice from an experienced PTOC officer about how to handle them.

*Problem: No agenda time at my home PTO*

Work-around: Send the “report” via email to all officers and the Principal. Broaden addressees to include other parent volunteers and maybe the lead teacher, depending on the nature of the item and the target audience.

*Problem: No permission to publish anything PTOC-related in the school newsletter (strong belief that the newsletter is only for building-specific information)*

Work-around: Find another publication like e-backpack or tag onto other occasional parent-to-parent messages. If needed, rely on emails, phone calls and personal interactions. Work with your PTO leadership to help them understand why PTOC can be helpful to your parent community

*Problem: No access to PTO Officer meetings (not an elected position)*

Work-around: Ask for updates, stay on friendly terms with at least one officer, and remind them of your role and your willingness to help. Part of your job is communication, and sometimes the hardest part is making sure you can communicate well with your PTO leadership. It takes time, but it’s worth it.

*Problem: Widely-held views that district-wide stuff is generally much less important than building-specific stuff*

Work-around: Acknowledge the important work the in-building volunteers are doing. When opportunities arise, open a respectful dialogue about how we are all owners of our community-governed schools, each elementary building’s students will be graduating into neighborhood middle and high schools, and will be making lifelong friends with students at many other buildings in this district.

Point out the district-level and even state/Federal policy issues that affect your school: everything from class size, teacher evaluation, standardized testing, and curriculum to teacher evaluation facilities, transportation, and custodial services. More and more, the quality of our children’s education is shaped by decisions made far from our schools.