

What is the PTOC and What is my Role as a PTOC Rep?

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

What is the PTOC?

The Parent/Teacher Organization Council (PTOC) is a support organization for all the PTOs and PTSOs in Ann Arbor Public Schools. The Council is made up of each of the PTOs and PTSOs 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 and PTSOs, 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. In a community with over 30 school buildings, however, AAPS parents needed a way to communicate with each other, seek advice, share practices, and to deal with issues of common concern. So, the PTO Council was formally incorporated in 2011.

The PTOC:

- supports the 3Cs: communication, collaboration, and coordination among member PTOs/PTSOs;
- Offers a variety of supports to member PTOs/PTSOs;
- Brings the voice of the parent community to district administration; and
- Ensures member PTOs and PTSOs and parent communities are informed about district-wide issues, policies, or events that concern AAPS parents.

So, what does it mean to be a PTOC Rep?

Serving your local PTO or PTSO as their representative to PTOC Council means:

- 1) You are the main channel for your PTO/PTSO to bring up concerns, ask questions, and to reach out to other AAPS parent communities.
- 2) You speak and act for your PTO/PTSO as the Council considers actions, take positions, and prepares its strategy for consulting with district leadership.

- 3) You also bring meeting information back to your local PTO/PTSO passing along information, explaining district-wide issues, discussing PTOC actions and positions, and generally keeping your PTO and its officers fully informed about what is happening at the district level.

What are my responsibilities as a PTOC Rep?

Attend PTOC Membership Meetings:

- 1) This is where we take care of our business and each meeting is organized around a topic relevant to all AAPS parents.
- 2) Be at your local PTO/PTSO meetings if at all possible, to share what you learned from the previous PTOC meeting, key issues facing our schools, and answers to questions you brought to the PTOC membership meeting. Start out the year by explaining what the PTOC is and does!

Communicate:

- a) 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.
- b) Consider sharing PTOC social media posts with your school community.

Participate:

- 1) As your PTO's/PTSO's representative, you contribute to the PTOC. In recent years, PTOC has become much more active but is also working to be more visible in the community particularly when it comes to issues of equity and inclusion within the PTOC, our PTOs/PTSOs, and the AAPS community. PTOC officers give regular reports at school board meetings, and PTOC leaders meet with the Superintendent to cover key issues and parent concerns. We have an important voice in shaping district policy. Our effectiveness depends on how well we really represent Ann Arbor Public School parents and school communities.

How do I bring value to my PTO/PTSO?

The role of a PTOC Rep does not always run smoothly. Sometimes, a PTOC Rep may feel they do not have a voice in the work of the PTO/PTSO or understand how to help their PTO/PTSO see the value added of the PTOC Rep position. Perhaps the following might help you think about how to frame a conversation with your PTO/PTSO Executive Board about your role.

Challenge: The PTOC Rep does not have designated time on the PTO/PTSO agenda

Possible Solution: Definitely send an update about the last PTOC Membership meeting and possible action items for the PTO/PTSO report via email to your

PTO/PTSO officers and the principal. You may also wish to include other non-Exec Board parent volunteers and maybe the teacher rep to the PTO/PTSO, depending on the nature of the item and the target audience. When possible, post your notes from the PTOC Membership Meeting to your PTO/PTSO Facebook group.

Challenge: You are not a part of the PTO/PTSO Officers meetings.

Possible Solution: Ask for updates from the president/chair, try to maintain an open, positive relationship with at least one officer, and remind them of your role and willingness to help.

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

Possible solution: Acknowledge the important work building volunteers are doing. When opportunities arise, open a respectful dialogue about how we are all owners of our community-governed schools and that they are all interconnected. While students and families belong to a particular school at the moment, each elementary student and their families will move onto one of AAPS's middle schools and then to one of the high schools.

Challenge: Your PTO/PTSO has not paid their PTOC Membership dues.

Possible solution: The PTOC Treasurer will send periodic updates to PTO/PTSO treasurers and chairs/presidents. If your PTO/PTSO is struggling to see the value-added of being dues-paying members of the PTOC, please know that PTOC officers are always willing to visit a PTO/PTSO meeting to share more about our work and answer any questions your PTO/PTSO.

Want to reach the PTO Council Executive Board leadership?

Parent Teacher Organization Council

PTOC Chairs can be reached at: PTOCchairs@gmail.com

PTOC Treasurer can be reached at: PTOCtreasurer@gmail.com

PTOC Corresponding Secretary can be reached at: ptoc.correspondence@gmail.com

Our web page with meeting schedules and contact information can be found via AAPS home page by navigating to the "Community" tab and then selecting "PTO Council" or at <https://www.a2schools.org/domain/2274>

Welcome Aboard!