

Class representatives

What is a class/year representative?

Class or year representatives are volunteer parents who represent all parents in a particular class or year group. These representatives liaise between parents and the PTA and provide the collective voice of the class/year parents to the PTA, parent council or school on any particular school-based issues. There is usually one parent representing each class but you may wish to ask for two volunteers per class: that way parents can share the workload and may feel more confident working in pairs. Secondary schools may prefer to ask for a volunteer from each year group, rather than from each class, and so may schools which are small or where volunteer numbers are low.

What do class representatives do?

A class/year representative is a friendly point of contact for parents with children in that year group or class. Their duties may include the following:

- Compile a class contact list (to include the names of parents, their emails, phone numbers and the names of their children) and circulate this to other parents. Year groups may also wish to set up a closed Facebook group for parents in that year.
- Promote PTA events and activities to parents in the class/year (by email/leaflet in book bag/in person).
- Be the collective voice of the class/year group to the PTA/parent council or school on any matters affecting their children where parents would like to see change (for example, bigger cloakroom space or better ways to bring letters home from school etc.)
- Ask other parents for one-off offers of assistance for events such as staffing a stall at a fair and organising class fundraising cake sales.
- Coordinate language ambassadors for parents in that class/year, if your school/PTA offers this.
- Talk to class teachers regarding what items they would like the PTA to fund for their classes/years and feedback to the PTA committee.
- Attend PTA meetings (they will not have the right to vote on PTA matters unless they are also elected as PTA committee members).
- Represent their class/year on a parent council/parent voice group which the school would consult with on school-related policies and initiatives. If the school uses the PTA as its parent consultative body then the class/year representatives would represent their classes/years at PTA meetings.
- Arrange get-togethers such as coffee mornings for parents in that class/year (primary) or

evening drinks at a local pub (secondary).

- Primary school class representatives may also like to organise Christmas or leaving presents/cards for class teachers (asking for donations from parents and buying appropriate gifts and/or asking pupils to sign a card).

Benefits of class representatives

For parents

- May remove barriers for those parents who wish to get involved in school life or the PTA but don't feel confident enough to do so or aren't sure how to take it forward.
- Creates friendships among other parents in the class.
- Contact details can be used to create a class/year email group or Facebook group which can evolve into a supportive parent network where parents can email each other about homework assignments, check dates of school events and informally discuss other school related issues relevant to parents with children in that year.
- Parents may find it less daunting to speak to another parent than speaking directly to the school.
- Fosters a sense of team spirit among class/year group parents.

For children

- As friendships between parents bloom so too will friendships between children – particularly important for children new to the school or in first year entrance.
- Children may feel more comfortable talking to their peers if they see their parents doing the same.
- Contact details can help parents arrange play dates and invitations to birthday parties for the children.

For the PTA

- Helps the PTA reach more parents in a friendly manner, making parents aware of the PTA's objectives and events.
- Generates more volunteers at events.
- Can get parents involved who had not previously taken a proactive interest in the PTA.
- Assists fundraising by organising class cake sales/ class stalls at events.

"We swear by ours. As the Chair of our PTA, we couldn't be without the class representatives – they probably do the most important job in the whole PTA."

For class representatives

- Gives them an active role in making the PTA successful.

- Can help them get to know parents across the whole school.
- Gives them an insight into their child's classroom and school life.
- Raises their profile at school and helps build trust with the class teacher and the head teacher.

For school

- Enhances communication between teachers and parents.
- Class/year representatives as a parent consultative body can provide a valuable insight into any issues that may be surfacing among parents.
- For primary schools: provides a valuable resource to assist with class trips/events within the class and help to create a rota of helpers to come into class and get involved in projects, such as reading etc.
- For secondary schools: year reps also provides a valuable resource as a way of feeding back views on specific issues affecting years via a central source.
- Fosters bonds between parents and classes and, ultimately, the entire school community.

How to get started

If you have an established PTA, this is the ideal starting point to find class representatives. Ask attendees at a PTA meeting if they wish to be a representative. If you have more than one volunteer interested, suggest two volunteers share the role. If there are classes that are not represented by any PTA members, ask the PTA whether they know any parents in those classes who might make good class representatives. Teachers will also probably have a good idea of who, among their parents, might take on the role. Alternatively, the school could send all parents a message asking for parents interested in the role to contact the PTA. It's a good idea to provide a clear outline of what the role would entail to encourage parents who are new to volunteering to get involved.

Next steps

Once you have your class/year representatives in place consider doing the following:

- Display photos and names of each class representative outside the relevant classroom. Include details of their children as class representatives may find it helpful communicating with other parents by sending messages home in school book bags and asking for responses via their child's book bag. Secondary schools may wish to put details of the parent liaison year representative on the teacher board or similar.
- Publicise your representatives using existing school and PTA communication channels: noticeboard, website, Facebook page, newsletter etc.
- Primary school class representatives could send a messages to parents using children's book bags to introduce themselves and to ask for parents' contact details. Make it clear

that these will not be shared with anyone other than the parents in that class/year and will enable better communication between class parents and between parents and the PTA. Remind parents that having a list of class/ year contacts can be helpful when organising play dates and parties.

- Secondary school year representatives could ask the school office to send separate emails to each year group on behalf of the PTA to introduce the representatives and to ask for parents' contact details.
- Once contact details have been received, representatives could send parents in their class/year an email with the list of parents and contact details and advise details of the year Facebook group (if setting one up).
- Representatives may find it helpful to start a dialogue with the other parents in their class/ year by inviting them to a coffee morning after drop off/ a trip to the local playground after school/ a evening pub drink. This will give parents an opportunity to get to know each other, especially useful if it is at the start of the school year.

Key points

- A friendly point of contact for parents with children in that year group or class.
- Enhances communication between teachers and parents.
- A valuable resource to assist with class trips/events.

Reviewed: March 2017