

Roles and Responsibilities of the Parent Class Representatives

During the first Parents' Evening of the school year, two parent Class Representatives (Class Reps) are elected per class by the other parents in that class.

Responsibilities to be divvied per interest.

Parent Class Representatives are important links for information and representation purposes, as well as contact points for parents. The main role of the representatives is to advocate for the children and parents in the class and provide general support to the classroom teacher as indicated.

Class Reps also organize/coordinate social class activities as well as fundraising activities for the class. In addition, the Class Rep communicates information to the Parents Association Committee on the behalf of the classroom parents making their interests known to the teachers and administrative staff.

Parent Class Representatives may organize activities relating to the class and section (sponsors, events, meetings with teachers, inspectors, etc.). Parent Class Representatives can help create a positive classroom climate including the organization of activities in/out of school to promote child/parent class comradery and socialization. This climate of trust has a positive effect on the students and their schooling.

By establishing rapport with the class teachers, Parent Class Representatives can raise questions, ideas, and problems directly with that class teacher. It is suggested that the Representatives set a meeting with the class teacher, during his or her set timetable hour, to get to know him or her making necessary future discussions easier.

Class Lists - One of the Parent Class Representatives must forward e-mails received from the Parents' Association (PA), school, and or teacher as necessary. Parent Class Representatives must therefore obtain parent contact information (at a meeting or via agendas). This class list must be kept current to communicate with all the class parents. The school and the Parents' Association are not at present allowed to provide parents' contact information. The Class Representative must obtain this information/ parent permission for use in classroom purposes.

WhatsApp Group - it should not be affiliated with the school and should be simply used as a matter of convenience and means of quick information for the parents. Any official dissemination of information should be shared via email. WhatsApp is an efficient way to send a reminder about previously communicated information. It is also a handy way to direct parents to check their email.

Class Funds - are collected and held by the Class Reps for use in funding activities, day trips, class parties, class materials, crafts, project funding, teacher gifts etc. The Rep must keep track of the funds logging all deposits and expenditures while maintaining the receipts from purchases.

In the primary school (GS) the amount is determined by the sections/teachers of the primary and is collected from each student. This money carries over from year to year moving with the class. Some Class Reps may choose to provide the teacher with a "slush fund" to eliminate the need for constant reimbursement. The amount collected should be prorated if the child joins the class after the start of the school year or likewise leaves early.

The secondary school (OS) does not have as many classroom expenses thus there is not a known/agreed upon amount. Most classes usually request enough to cover teacher gifts, raffle baskets etc. for the year averaging about 5-10 Euro per student. It is easier to collect from everyone at the beginning than to try to rely on payment per activity. It should be noted that some OS classes choose not to collect ahead of time. This can be discussed with your class via email or at parents' evening.

School Events - such as Class Parties, Graduation Activities, Project Week, Open Day, and Summer Festival etc. often include some level of support from the Class Reps. The Rep is not obligated to attend but often supports, assists, or helps coordinate volunteers as requested by the classroom teacher. The PA raffles off baskets from each class at the Summer Festival every year. The Class Rep requests items or funds to create a themed basket. (Note the responsibility does not have to be solely on the Rep and they may delegate a class parent to take on this project as well as others).

Social Events - are often coordinated by the Class Reps or delegated to other parents for get-togethers. This can be organized for the parents and or children in the class to foster class camaraderie. Examples are coffee morning for your parents, weekend meet ups at the park, planned outings such as bowling, mini golf, swimming, picnics etc. The ideas are limitless and up to the Class Rep and the parents of class the as to how social they would like to be.

Teacher support- varies greatly per teacher. More support is often requested at the primary level with classroom management on special events, organizing activities, copying and assembling class related work, buying and wrapping of gifts for the children and teachers, assistance with scheduling and execution.

Class Reminders- often fall to the Class Rep. even though it is not solely the Class Reps responsibility. The Class Rep is like the “welcoming committee”. It is assumed that the Class Rep has all the answers. They are often looked to for guidance on school and community issues including reminders about closings, holiday dates, school activities, traditions, when to bring helmets, questions about field trips, when a packed lunch is needed, etc. This occurs frequently with a new family to the school/country or a first-time primary child. The WhatsApp group is great for this type of dialog. Other parents often chime in sharing information and ideas, reminders, assurance etc. freeing the Class Rep to more important matters.

Resources: the Class Rep should remind parents that they can find answers to their questions located on the following websites:

- ESK school web site www.es-karlsruhe.eu/ (information, calendars, etc.)
- European Schools' website www.eursc.org (school programs, statutes, etc.)
- Parents' Association website www.esk-eltern.de

Collaborative PA activities- The Class Representatives work in conjunction with the Parents' Association and are represented at the following meetings:

Educational Board Meeting (Education Committee)- meet 2x per year

Purpose: The Education Committee is a council for internal school covering matters related to both the primary section and the secondary section.

Attendance: representatives of parents, teachers, and pupils

Class Reps role: Section Class Rep represents their section in these ECs. The individual Class Rep collates information, issues, feedback from the parents.

Outcomes: objective to create favorable conditions for efficient teaching and learning and to promote positive and stimulating the interpersonal relationship among the stakeholders.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)- meet 1x per year (previously March changed to November)

Purpose: To present and get audited financial statements approved by the members; to recruit new members to the committee; provides an opportunity for members to question the board/committee, get responses for unsatisfactory performance and challenge them on the direction taken.

Attendance: Parent Class Representatives should participate in the Parents' Association Annual General Assembly when all parents are invited. If Parent Class Representatives are not able to attend, they must please remember to nominate another parent as proxy.

Class Reps role: to be present (not mandatory)

Outcomes: audited statements, active exchange, and new members.

PA/Class Rep Meeting- meet 2x per year

Purpose: for exchange of information. The PA provides information from various meetings - Administrative Board, School Advisory Board, meeting with Directors etc. and to collate feedback from the Class Reps.

Attendance: Parent Class Representatives

Class Reps role: is to share feedback, issues, and concerns of parents.

Outcomes: Promote a positive relationship and stimulating exchange between the parents' association and the parent Class Reps.

Shared communication: The Parents' Association Committee will contact the Parent Class Representatives before each meeting for input of parents' questions on everyday matters and the school's educational projects. In addition, the Class Rep can escalate any unresolved class issues. Approximately once per month or so the Class Rep should probe parents in a neutral manner to prevent escalation of underlying issues.

Language Sections Representatives: are selected from the new PA committee members after the Annual General Assembly at the first meeting of the PA committee.

Interparents: To deal with matters that go beyond local competence, the Parents' Association belongs to Interparents, which brings together the Parents' Associations of the 13 European Schools. Issues and proposals for submission to the Board of Governors for consideration are Formulated here.

It should be noted that our European school is not a self-governing body. It comes under a system run by the Board of Governors of the European schools. The majority of its' teachers are sent and organized by national inspectors and its' buildings are made available and run by the host country (in our case Germany). Patience and understanding are required when dealing with matters that cannot be handled/decided at local level (marking, syllabuses, European hours, etc.). To deal with matters that go beyond local competence, the Parents' Association belongs to Interparents. Parent Class Representatives are the first link in the chain to encourage parents into making a positive contribution to life at the school

When to escalate topics to the PA committee:

- a. If a parent Class Representative has not been able to sort out serious matters relating to teaching or content of the syllabus in the class with the teacher, contact the Section Representative or a member of the PA committee.
- b. If Parent Class Representatives receive questions on a specific subject (school trips, transport, health and safety, canteen, etc.) from parents, please forward to the PA.
- c. The Parents' Association President, and deputies can be contacted by the Parent class representatives on any policy, teaching, administrative or social matter which has not been possible to sort out at class or section level.
- d. Likewise, it is the duty of the President to assist and inform any family that needs to defend its rights.

To avoid misunderstanding and frustration for parents and the school when handling sensitive information, the PA looks for solutions that are in the best interest of all parties involved.

Review the following scenarios:

a. What to do if:

- a parent informs you that there is a specific problem concerning their child in class?
This problem is specific to this child.

Recommendation:

Advise the parent to speak directly to the teacher of the class/subject. You, as parent Class Rep can also attend for support if the parent wishes it. If the parents are not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, then they should speak to the deputy-director about the issue. If there is still no acceptable solution, then the parent should approach the PA for assistance, advice and support. The details of the situation will be kept in strict confidence.

b. What to do if:

a parent informs you that there is a problem concerning their child in a class and this impacts other children as well?

Recommendation:

Speak privately with the parents of the children involved in an informal way (not by email) and try to assess the seriousness of the situation.

Arrange a meeting with the parents involved and the class/subject teacher to discuss the issues and try to find a solution agreeable to all. If this is not successful, inform the PA of the situation and suggest that a meeting with the deputy head may be needed. If the issues are not resolved easily, the PA can support the parents and have the matter discussed within a management meeting.

c. What to do if:

a number of parents inform you that there is a serious problem concerning the whole class in some way?

Recommendation:

Ask the parents individually if they are aware of the situation or if they support the complaint. This should be done sensitively avoiding emails and other written communication. As a parent Class Rep you should compile the responses of the parents in your class and inform your section rep that an issue has arisen concerning the class as a whole. The PA will advise on how to proceed and will also approach the deputy-head and or school management with the concerns of the parents. This will ensure confidentiality, avoiding misunderstanding. The matter can be dealt with quickly and quietly, so that pupils are unaffected and can continue with their study program.

At all times, the parent Class Rep will be kept involved by the PA so that parents are aware of the progress of any issues that may arise.

The PA appreciates the importance of the Class Reps in furthering the wellbeing for the parents and children. It is a huge contribution to the positive development of the school by fostering communication.