



SO, WHAT IS A PTA/PA?

ALL IS REVEALED OR AT LEAST SOME HELPFUL HINTS

As the national organisation for PTA/PAs it is not surprising that we are often asked what exactly is a PTA/PA? The answer is simple.

A PTA/PA is whatever you want to make it.

There is no required, legally correct model. The parents and teachers at a school are free to decide both on their constitution and on what they want to do.

The constitution should describe the organisation which you want to have, and we have free leaflets indicating the main things it should cover i.e.

- | aims of the organisation
- | membership
- | how the committee is selected
- | how the office bearers are appointed
- | voting procedures
- | the need for an annual audit and general meeting etc.

With regards to what a PTA does, wide-ranging freedom is all very well, but what does that mean in practice? A good starting point is to say what a PTA/PA is not.

When a headteacher recently said to us "A PTA is only for fundraising isn't it?" -we were able to say "No!"

When a parent recently asked "Can a PTA discuss educational issues?" - we were able to say "Yes!"

There is always the shining example of Biggar High School PTA which got itself involved in the safer school transport campaign to the extent that they were the driving force behind setting up a Scottish branch of BUSK (Belt Up School Kids) and have been central in arguing for government legislation for seat-belts, supervision and route management of school buses.

However, for many PTAs/PAs such big campaigns don't come along and it is helpful to know what to do on a day to day basis. We can do no better than borrow from a leaflet which one of our members - Boroughmuir High school - has sent to all parents.

What is the PTA?

It is partnership between parents and teachers to support all in the school community.

What does the PTA do?

- | Raises funds for non-curricular ventures (e.g. school clubs, trips, pupil/ parent common room, displays)
- | Informs parents of new initiatives in education and about common concerns (e.g. anti-bullying programmes, HIV/Aids, 5 - 14, Higher Still)
- | Organises educational evenings to meet staff and learn about teaching methods.
- | Organises social gatherings (e.g. cheese and wine party, Christmas ceilidh, fashion shows etc.)
- | Acts as an informal channel of communication between parents and staff.

How can I help?

- | Help with fundraising events e.g. fairs, jumble sales etc.
- | Support social events - even volunteer to do the washing up!
- | Join the PTA committee - the meetings are fun and not too frequent!
- | Tell the committee about your ideas, interests and concerns.
- | Come to information evenings to find out about changes in education.

All the above points are in a real leaflet sent out by a real PTA committee. It provides a useful framework within which we hope all PTAs

and PAs can work. Our thanks to Boroughmuir High School PTA for allowing us to share this information with you.

How do you measure success?

Inevitably, when we're at regional meetings, talking about what PTAs do, someone will say "we didn't raise much money, but everyone enjoyed it". And that's what makes it a success. It's a mistake to measure success only in cash terms. Anything which involved lots of folk, got plenty of people into the school and generated a real buzz, is successful, even if it's run at a loss!

What's the difference between a PTA and a school board?

School Boards were set up by law and their membership is determined by law. The PTA is a voluntary organisation and its membership can be whatever the parents and teachers at a school decide.

The board has some specific duties laid down in the legislation which the PTA cannot do. It is involved in the appointment of staff, it has a right to consider the headteacher's spending proposals. However, the Board is not the senior organisation and both the PTA and the board can fundraise, hold meetings, discuss parents concerns etc.

There are no clear boundaries between what a PTA can do and what a school board can do and it is for the board and PTA at each and every school to work out how they will work together. In some cases there is a simple agreement that whoever raises an issues first, will see it through. In some schools, the PTA organises clubs, socials and curriculum issues, whilst the board deals with funding and issues like drugs. There is no right and wrong and PTAs are certainly not restricted in their activities because of the presence of a board.

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