Deutsche Schule Melbourne Parent Representative model

Opportunity: during the lockdown, a working group called the Together Project - consisting of parents, teachers, and administrators from across the DSM community - met to look at ways to improve communication and engagement at our school. One of the ideas that came up is that we need a new Parent Representative model, one that helps parents stay connected with the school and allows for greater ***collaboration, transparency,*** and ***feedback***.

Purpose: to constructively support the school and to have a positively engaged Parent Representative Committee (PRC) that regularly meets with the school and represents parents' views, sentiments, and feedback. The PRC is also responsible for soliciting feedback between parents and the class teacher/s and encouraging opportunities to connect and communicate outside of class.
The new model aims to be a simple way for parents to connect with the school, to help improve and develop our small school, receive timely updates, and to improve transparency and communication.

Key activities and responsibilities:

1. **Selection/Nomination:**
   a. It is recommended that two Parent Representatives are nominated per class - one of these Parent Representatives will attend the PRC to represent their class (alternating).
2. **Communications:**
   a. A communication channel should be created by the Parent Representatives (if not already existing from previous years) to appropriately communicate with the parent group (WhatsApp is recommended and most widely used). Parents can opt-in/out.
   b. The PRC liaises with the school, not on behalf of the school with the parents - no official communication will be circulated by the PRC outside of the Parent Representative filtering updates back through their defined communication channel (ie: WhatsApp).
3. **Social Events:**
   a. A Stammtisch event for the class should be organized by the Parent Representatives each term. This event is typically held on a weekend/after school and is a great opportunity for parents to connect, and share feedback that the Parent Representatives can bring to the teacher or PRC meeting, as relevant.
4. **Meetings:**
   a. One Parent Representative per class attends the PRC meeting each term and brings relevant feedback for the school, and best represents the class views/opinions. They subsequently feedback any news or updates to the parents in a timely fashion via the communication channel.
   b. The Parent Representative/s also meets with the relevant teacher/s each term and brings feedback, suggestions, and questions from the parent group that is classroom specific.

What kind of behaviours define a DSM Parent Representative?

A successful Parent Representative has a desire to positively engage with the school. They are:

- Committed to the role
- Responsive - swiftly communicating issues, questions, and opportunities
- Solutions focused
- Open-minded and inclusive - they value diversity
- Supportive, constructive, and collaborative and seek consensus
- Aligned with the vision, values, and philosophy of the school
- Have the desire to represent the whole group of class parents
- Willing to be the liaison between their class parents and the school

PRC Roles:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal attends (and is appointed minute taker)
- Chair of the PRC: the main point of contact between the school & PRC. The role is responsible for circulating the agenda, confirming meeting times/locations, and circulating minutes/following up on actions. This Chair role is appointed from the PRC (through nomination) in the first meeting. The position is held for one school year and can be held for a total of up to two years.
- Parent Representative (two may attend but only one vote per class. Recommend alternate attendance).
- Optional for board members to attend (pending relevant agenda items)

PRC meeting recommendations:

- Meetings to occur five times a year, these dates should be set at the start of the year.
- Two meetings in term one, one in each subsequent term, additional meetings added as required (PAs to be flexible if additional meetings are required to address timely issues).
- First meeting in term one: establish the PRC, explain key activities and roles, and Chair nominated.
- Flexibility to schedule extra ad hoc meetings as required - these additional meetings may have particular focuses/themes and can be attended by a wider group of parents - if of interest.
- Standard agenda to be developed:
    - Reminder of principles; collaboration, transparency, and feedback
    - Reminder of the value of responsiveness: all PRC members, inc. board, and administration to respond swiftly to issues, questions, and opportunities
    - What's happening at a class level?
    - Principal's report - what's happening at a school administration level
    - Input into the DSM bi-annual Town Hall Meeting
    - What is happening across the school that parents can get involved in?
    - Actions status from the last meeting
    - Carry over agenda items (e.g. if the agenda was too full last time, these items have priority)
    - Clear follow-up actions to follow the meeting
- Decision making: as required, resolutions can be voted on during the PA meeting with one vote per class and one each for the Principal and Deputy. The majority rules, no participant in the PA model has the power to unilaterally make decisions or change the PR model. An independent issues resolution process will be used to address and resolve any long-term issues. All outcomes and decisions regarding governance, policy, and organizational matters remain with the board and the leadership of DSM
- Record keeping: All PRC meeting minutes are to be kept on file on DSM's Google Drive to ensure information is appropriately recorded for long-term reference for both school administration and parents. The PRC folder on the Drive will be shared with all PRC members.
- Annual review to include a parent questionnaire circulated to all parents in Term 4. Feedback and suggestions are to be reviewed and recommendations discussed in the first meeting in the new school year.