



Twin Cities German Immersion School
Parent Teacher Organization
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Welcome!

Welcome to a new year at the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS)! Any and all current TCGIS parents, grandparents, teachers and staff are considered members of the PTO and are welcome to volunteer and attend meetings at any time. Whether this is your child's first year at the school, or you are a long-time member of the TCGIS community, please read this PTO Guide carefully and keep it as a handy reference throughout the year to see what the PTO has to offer you and your family.

What's Different This Year?

We have been very busy this summer finalizing the new committee structure, supporting a Fun Run, and brainstorming on ideas on ways to support our teachers. With that said we are organized and ready for a new year! The new committee structure is highlighted below. While most other changes might not be that obvious, those of you that are returning members may notice a few changes in the fundraisers and volunteer opportunities sections below.

Our two main focus areas this year are:

1. To develop closer connections between school and home by encouraging parent involvement.
2. To support staff by enriching their environment and fostering a strong community.

PTO Mission & Purpose

TCGIS PTO is an organization of volunteers who actively support our school, families, and staff throughout the school year. Due to the fact that our families come from all around the Twin Cities area, we strive to foster a positive sense of community within our school. This is a great place to have a voice by sharing your opinions and connecting

with others working towards a common goal of supporting our school. Our mission statement and purpose are summarized below.

Mission

Fostering the relationship between school, home, and community for the success of every TCGIS student.

Purpose

- 1) To Support Our Staff: The TCGIS PTO is committed to supporting our staff as they go about the critical work of educating our kids.
- 2) To Support Our School: The PTO undertakes fundraisers that draw people together and/or bring some other added value to the TCGIS community.
- 3) To Support Our Families: The PTO works to give our families new ways to become involved in our school and to build stronger connections within the TCGIS community.

TCGIS PTO Leadership

The PTO is led by the Executive Committee that consists of the following officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Officer Staff Appreciation, General Officer Fundraising, and General Officer Communications. The Executive Committee sets meeting agendas, creates the annual budget, manages PTO funds, coordinates the work of the committees, liaises with TCGIS administration and school board, and much, much more! Each spring the PTO elects leadership for the following year.

2018 – 2019 TCGIS PTO Executive Committee

President: Clare Roney

Vice President: Christine Ustun

Secretary: Jaime Willoughby

Treasurer: Sarah Robbins

General Officer Staff Appreciation: Danielle Behling

General Officer Fundraising: Ashley Clayton

General Officer Communications: Catherine Radecki

You may contact any of the PTO Executive Committee members by email at tcgispto@gmail.com. We really appreciate you using this single group email address, so

that we can serve you in a timely fashion and better preserve historical knowledge of the PTO from year to year.

TCGIS PTO Committees

The Executive Committee oversees all PTO committees. The four focused committees are: communications, staff appreciation, fundraising, and finance.

If you are interested in volunteering for or have questions about any of the opportunities/events mentioned in this guide, please contact the specific contact committee coordinator listed or tcgispto@gmail.com.

1. Communications Committee

Communication Committee members: Catherine Radecki, Alix Aase, Carrie Reay

The communications committee has a main focus on outreach – both within the school and staff, as well as with families. Overall this committee is responsible for monthly PTO Newsletters, updating the PTO website and creating a presence on social media. The committee is evolving with the times and figuring out the best way to reach and mobilize our TCGIS families.

2. Staff Appreciation Committee

Staff Appreciation general officer and members: Danielle Behling, Heather Cooper

The Teacher Appreciation Committee is responsible for staff and intern appreciation throughout the school year and for specific events. These events include Teacher Appreciation Week, staff appreciation potluck, conference meals for teachers, and more! Please note that Teacher Appreciation Week celebrations take the place of organized, PTO-sponsored collections for teacher gifts. (what does this mean)

3. Fundraising Committee

Fundraising general officer and members: Ashley Clayton, Lora Murtha, Kari Lindberg

The fundraising committee is responsible for the money the PTO takes in and distributes to the school. Depending on how much money the PTO takes in from fundraising dictates the budget for the following year. This important committee organizes all the events. Maskenball, Auction, Strudel sale, Plant sale, and Fun Run, are among our major fundraising efforts.

4. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee consists of the PTO treasurer, president, vice president (fundraising coordinator), and two interested community members. This committee ensures that the PTO is fiscally responsible by reviewing monthly bank statements and budgets, provides checks and balances to the organization, and oversees compliance of policies and procedures.

PTO Communications

We respect your time and email inbox! Please look for a monthly PTO Newsletter. In addition, a brief PTO update is included in the Elternbrief, a weekly e-newsletter put out by the school. You can also always go to the PTO section of the school's website at www.tcgis.org for more information, including past meeting agendas and minutes.

Are you on Facebook? So are we! "Like" the page for the Twin Cities German Immersion School PTO to see fun pictures and get the latest news and events.

Follow us on Instagram @germanschoolpto

Not on Facebook or Instagram? No problem. We don't share any news or announcements there that aren't included in the Elternbrief or other all-school communication.

The TCGIS community is becoming more active with lots of events, messages, initiatives, volunteer opportunities, and activities. To help keep everyone informed in the most effective way possible, the TCGIS PTO is now utilizing a new communications platform called Konstella. This system will allow the PTO to reach the school community digitally and on the go. The system has many features which we hope that you will take advantage of, such as committee signups, parent groups, room parent center, calendaring, volunteer sign-ups and announcements.

To get started with Konstella, simply click <https://www.konstella.com/cd/wBeha0> which will take you immediately through the registration process. Note that the link is case sensitive and will expire on 9/15/2018. Alternatively, you may log on to the website at <https://www.konstella.com>, select 'Find Your School' in the upper right hand corner and start to type out the first few letter of Twin Cities German Immersion and our school will automatically populate and you may proceed with the registration from there.

PTO Fundraising Philosophy

We embrace “added value” fundraisers, such as sales of products that are locally or sustainably made and events that bring our school community together. We also believe that school fundraising is the work of adults, not children. The PTO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and all donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

The fundraisers below support the PTO’s budget. We don’t expect families to participate in every fundraiser, but we hope this information will help you determine which events best fit your interests, so that you can make plans to support them if you so choose.

PTO Fundraisers & Community Events

Fundraisers

While we try to incorporate community building into everything that we do, the primary purpose of the events/projects below is to raise funds. Note: the funds raised this school year will determine our PTO budget for the following year.

Strudel Sale: We sell traditional German-style strudel (a layered, flakey pastry with sweet or savory filling) by Ruhland’s Strudel Haus, frozen and ready to bake for the holidays. We offer this sale during the holiday season and in the spring, because TCGIS folks just can't get enough strudel.

Maskenball: This adults-only themed party is held in February/March and includes music, dancing, food, raffles, prizes, and fun! Past themes have included “I Love the 80s,” “German Fairy Tales,” “A Night at the Oscars,” etc. Costumes are welcome, but not required.

Auction Great Gatherings, Admin Adventures & Teacher Treasures: These “ticketed” events are wonderful community gatherings that also raise a significant amount of funds to benefit the school. TCGIS families and staff host a wide variety of large and small events throughout the year for adults only, kids only, and families. Sign up spots are purchased online through our fundraising software.

Fall and Spring Plant Sale: Get in the holiday spirit with festive plants in our fall plant sale. There is another one in held in the spring, but this one allows you to get a head start on your garden and help the school “grow” by purchasing your annuals and perennials.

Octoberfest Fun Run: Held in the fall. This event will be held around Como Lake and is a 5K run or walk. This is our first year offering this fundraising event and hope it is a success. Proceeds from the race will go towards safety locks on classroom doors.

Davanni's Pizza Night: Davanni's donates a portion of their sales to TCGIS on this designated evening. Be social and join other TCGIS families at the restaurant, or take home for a quiet night in. The fall pizza night will be held at the Cleveland & Grand location in St. Paul; the spring pizza night will be held at the Roseville off Perimeter Road.

Meet-Ups:

While TCGIS families have been informally connecting all along, this year the PTO will be coordinating more opportunities for families to stay connected outside of school – playing at the park, sledding in the winter, etc. Many will be no or low cost. If there is a cost it will be payable to the venue, not the PTO.

Regional picnics: September 15, 5-7pm. If you want to find other TCGIS parents in your area, these regional picnics are just the event. Held at the beginning of the school year, make your way to one of the 4 locations nearest your house and find carpooling, playdate arranging, and more. This is a great way to meet other TCGIS families in your area.

Kindergarten Play Date: October 6, 9:30-11:30am. This get together is held at the Salvation Army indoor play area off of Central Avenue in Minneapolis. Start meeting new families and let the kids play outside of school hours!

Game Night: Held in the winter, this evening brings TCGIS families together for fun and games. Just bring your favorite games and snacks to share. Learn a new game, meet a new friend, have fun. Simple!

Also available for each grade are "Play Date Kits" and "Smores Kits" donated by the PTO. These kits are available through your classroom contact (Eltern Kontakt). More specific details will be shared prior to the events.

**Exact events subject to change based on volunteer recruitment, community interest, etc. Check the PTO calendar for dates and watch for announcements in the Elternbrief.

PTO Funds

The money raised by the PTO supports our mission of “fostering the relationship between school, home, and community for the success of every TCGIS student.”

The following are the core goals and guiding principles in the use of Classroom Enrichment Funds:

- Eliminate requests for money made from school staff to parents (with certain exceptions, such as for field trips)
- Eliminate non-reimbursed out-of-pocket expenditures made by teachers for school-related purposes
- Provide funds for in-classroom items and activities that supplement, but do not supplant, the school’s normal classroom budgeting for teachers and classrooms

Classroom Enrichment Funds are for additional supplies for day-to-day consumables (e.g., pencils, markers, and paper); special project supplies; teaching aids not otherwise provided by school; food and decorations for parties; general classroom decorating and decor; games; and guest presenters. Essentially, the funds are for anything that makes the classroom environment more enriching and inviting to our students. (this may change depending on the survey results)

2017—2018 Funding Highlights

Raised Funds

- Davanni’s Pizza Nights - spring & fall
- Community Auction - online fundraiser of great gatherings, goodies and events
- Ruhland Strudel Sale - fall and spring
- Rummage Sale
- Herberger's coupon book sale - fall & spring
- Culvers
- Herbstfest- this was the PTO premier event, fall festival of craft vendors, live music, games and food
- Plant sale
- German Movie nights - two events with concessions
- Box Tops

Supported the School

- Donated \$6,000 to Classroom Enrichment Fund

- Donated to the TCGIS Picnic
- Donated \$1000 to the Director to use for toward staff enrichment
- Student Parliament - allocated starter funds for events
- Graduation - provided funds for event
- School Enrichment Fund of \$4,000 for school events, teacher attendance at History Day, and benches for the playground
- Hosted the "Meet the School Board Candidates" Forum
- Visited the capitol to advocate for charter school funding
- Speaker from MN Charter School Association

Built Community

- Ice Cream Social - at open house
- Regional Picnic - 4 different locations of family potlucks to meet TCGIS in your 'hood
- Kaffeeklatsch - in conjunction with open classroom, hosted 1 coffee & treat gatherings
- Grade level-specific events -
 - Kindergarten play date at an indoor playland
 - 3 S'mores bonfire events
 - Family Game afternoons - 3 different events
 - Parent meet-ups at Urban Forage Winery - 7 different events including hosting a parent panel for 7th and 8th-grade families transitioning to high school

Encouraged Staff

- Fall & Spring Conferences – organized potluck meals
- Added half day lunches - added 5 more potlucks on early release Wednesdays
- December Staff Appreciation Potluck
- Staff birthdays - each month staff received birthday cards and a treat
- Teacher appreciation week - smoothies, massages, ice cream, bagels, and happy hour
- End of the year food truck for staff
- Interns – PTO provides funds for intern activities, food & outings
- Raised \$1,200.00 to host a drawing for an end-of-the-year plane ticket for a teacher
- Replaced the teacher lounge coffee maker

TCGIS PTO Volunteer Opportunities

We always welcome and encourage volunteers. Volunteering is a great way to meet and

make friends! Here is a list of opportunities available throughout the year. Specific information, including how to volunteer, will be provided shortly after the beginning of the school year. We have volunteer opportunities that fit any schedule! (Note: Volunteers for ticketed community events do not receive free or reduced-price tickets for volunteer time.) Email tcgispto@gmail.com to share your availability! Better yet, sign up for one of our important fundraisers at the next PTO meeting!

Volunteer Opportunities:

- Communications Committee
- Teacher Appreciation Committee
- Finance Committee
- December Staff Appreciation Potluck
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- Fall or Spring Conference Meal
- “Meet-Up” planning
- Maskenball (planning and/or event)
- Game Night planning and/or event
- Plant sale coordinator
- Fall or Spring Plant Sale
- Fall or Spring Strudel Sales

Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I get involved with the PTO?

There are many reasons to get involved! The most important is the sense of community that the PTO fosters at the school.

Do I have to be a member of the PTO?

As a parent or guardian or teacher at TCGIS, you are automatically a member with voting rights in the TCGIS PTO.

What happens at a PTO meeting?

At a regular meeting the PTO finances, upcoming events, etc., are discussed. Membership may vote on anything from how to spend PTO money (outside the pre-approved budget), the annual budget, and policies and procedures for the organization. The PTO uses Robert's Rules of Order to guide the meetings. See the attached article on "Robert's Rules for Beginners" for a friendly, easy-to-understand summary on Robert's Rules of Order.

We bring in an outside speaker of special interest to the TCGIS parent community. In the past, we have had speakers on child safety, nutrition, and parenting.

Meetings can also serve as a forum to discuss issues that are important to parents at the school.

Do I need to RSVP for a meeting?

One week prior to the meeting, notification of the upcoming meeting will be sent either in the Elternbrief or in an email from the PTO. The message will include a link to sign up for the meetings. It is very helpful for planning and setup to know how many people to expect. If you would like to take advantage of the free childcare, you must RSVP and sign up for childcare.

Is childcare offered for all school meetings?

Childcare is available for all regular PTO meetings held at the school. On the occasions that a meeting is held off-site, there is no childcare provided.

It is imperative that you sign up for childcare, so that we can arrange for enough coverage.

I can't attend the regular monthly meetings. Can I still be involved?

Of course! There is no need to attend the regular meetings to be a part of the PTO. There are many other ways to be involved – we welcome your time, talent, or treasure at any time throughout the school year!

I want to volunteer in my child's classroom (or the school library, school committee, board, etc). How do I do that?

The PTO is only responsible for volunteers for PTO-sponsored projects and events. All other volunteer opportunities are coordinated through the school. Contact your child's teacher or the front office at info@tcgis.org for more information.

We welcome questions and feedback! If you have additional questions, please email them to tcgispto@gmail.com.