



**Our World Neighborhood Charter Schools Parent Teacher Organization**  
Elementary School: 36-12 35th Avenue, Astoria NY 11106 • (718) 392-3405  
Middle School: 31-20 37th Street, Astoria NY 11103 • (718) 274-2902

# **Our World Neighborhood Charter School Parent Teacher Organization By-Laws**

Amended August 2018

## **ARTICLE I – Name**

The name of this organization shall be Our World Neighborhood Charter School Parent Teacher Organization, hereinafter referred to in this document as “OWNCS PTO.”

## **ARTICLE II – Objectives**

- A. To support the administration, teachers and families in fulfilling the mission of Our World Neighborhood Charter School to educate our students to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners.
- B. To improve communication between home, school, parents and teachers.
- C. To help OWNCS schoolchildren reach their potential by working in partnership with teachers and administrators
- D. To encourage parent participation in the activities of the school.
- E. To pass on information on ways parents can be involved with their child’s learning, as given to us by administration and teachers.
- F. To have membership in the organization that is representative of the cultural and socio-economic diversity of OWNCS.
- G. To embrace cultural diversity within our school.
- H. To promote unity within the school between families, students, teachers and administration through activities and events.
- I. To facilitate positive interaction between school and community.

## **ARTICLE III – Basic Policies**

- A. OWNCS PTO shall be not-for-profit, nonsectarian and nonpartisan.
- B. The name of OWNCS PTO or names of any members in their official capacities shall not be used in any connection with a commercial concern.
- C. OWNCS PTO shall not directly or indirectly participate in public office or devote more than an insubstantial part of its activities to attempting to influence legislation by propaganda or otherwise.



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- D. OWNCS PTO shall cooperate with the school as an advisory body to support the improvement of education in ways that will not interfere with administration of the school and shall seek to control its policies in ways that support the administration.
- E. OWNCS PTO may cooperate with other organizations in such matters that support our objectives, but shall make no commitments that bind the PTO with those organizations.

## **ARTICLE IV – Membership**

### **Section 1 – Enrollment**

All parents and guardians of children enrolled in OWNCS and OWNCS staff members are automatically members of OWNCS PTO. The executive director of OWNCS will be a non-voting member with an advisory role.

### **Section 2 – Monetary Contributions**

Annual contributions shall be suggested in the amount of \$50.00 per household as part of the annual OWNCS PTO pledge drive. The written request for contributions shall advise members that payment is NOT a requirement of membership and does NOT affect voting or running for office. This money will go toward items in the OWNCS PTO budget, including, but not limited to the OWNCS Teachers' Wish List. Each year, OWNCS PTO gives each teacher \$200.00 for the OWNCS Teachers' Wish List. The suggested annual contribution and Teachers' Wish List monies may increase with a vote at a general PTO meeting.

### **Section 3 – Voting Privileges**

Each family of a child or children currently attending OWNCS shall be entitled to one vote at general meetings. Each staff member of OWNCS who does not have a child or children currently attending OWNCS shall also be entitled to one vote at general meetings.

### **Section 4 – Notice to Parents and Staff**

At the beginning of each school year, OWNCS PTO shall distribute a letter to all OWNCS parents and staff, advising them that they are automatically members of OWNCS PTO and encouraging them to actively participate.



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## **ARTICLE V – Officers (Executive Committee)**

### **Section 1 – Titles**

The officers (Executive Committee) of OWNCS PTO shall be 2 Co-Chairpersons, Treasurer, Fundraising Chairperson, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, 18 Grade Representatives (2 per grade) and 2 Teacher Representatives elected by the teachers.

### **Section 2 – Term of Office**

The term of office shall be from July 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>. Officers, excluding Grade Reps, shall be elected in May for a 2-year term, beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> after the election, and shall continue to serve through June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following calendar year. Grade Reps shall serve for 1 year. Each officer must have a child enrolled in the school for the duration of the officer's term. Co-Chairpersons will serve overlapping 2-year terms. After elections in May, the newly elected officers will start to be trained in the area that they will serve on OWNCS PTO.

### **Section 3 – Qualifications**

Eligibility for office is limited to parents, guardians or persons in parental relations who are members of OWNCS PTO and not employed by the school and not serving on the Board of Trustees. To serve as Co-Chair or Treasurer, the candidate must have served on the Executive Committee, the Board of Trustees and/or as a committee chairperson of a standing committee for one school year. If no qualified persons have volunteered to serve as candidates for Co-Chairperson(s) or Treasurer, any member of OWNCS PTO who has served as an active member of the general PTO, with approval of the PTO Executive Committee and the general membership, may stand for office.

All officers should sign the OWNCS PTO Pledge when taking office (see attached).

### **Section 4 – Duties of Officers (Executive Committee)**

#### **4.1 – Co-Chairpersons**

The Co-Chairpersons shall preside over all meetings and call special meetings of the Executive Committee. They are also ex-officio members of all committees except the Nominating Committee. The Co-Chairpersons will act as liaisons between the Grade Representatives and administration to insure proper communication. Upon the request of three members of the Executive Committee, a Co-Chairperson must call a special meeting of the Executive Committee. One or both Co-Chairpersons may represent the PTO at meetings of the OWNCS Board of Trustees.



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#### **4.2 – Grade Representatives**

The Grade Representatives shall preside at meetings in the absence of both the Co-Chairpersons and shall perform any other duties designed by the Executive Committee or the Co-Chairpersons. Two Grade Co-Representatives may share responsibilities. Each Grade Representative is responsible to work with the parents within their designated grade. Each Grade Representative will help recruit Class Parents and will communicate with the Class Parents and teachers of each class in their designated grade. Grade Representatives may also be asked to help organize grade-specific PTO fundraisers and/or help find volunteers for said fundraisers.

#### **4.3 – Recording Secretary**

The Recording Secretary shall keep a record of the PTO general and Executive Committee meetings and shall forward the minutes to the Executive Committee for approval or correction. The Recording Secretary will provide the general meeting minutes for posting on the OWNCS PTO website.

#### **4.4 – Corresponding Secretary**

The Corresponding Secretary shall attend to all correspondence of the PTO, except the correspondence customarily performed by the Treasurer. The Corresponding Secretary may issue notice of all general, executive and special meetings. The Corresponding Secretary shall perform the duties of the Recording Secretary as needed.

#### **4.5 – Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall help with receiving all monies of OWNCS PTO, keep accurate records and help pay out money as voted by the PTO and the Executive Committee. The Treasurer shall submit monthly statements, interim reports and an annual report to the Executive Committee. The Treasurer shall present a financial report at every general meeting. The Treasurer shall have the OWNCS PTO books prepared and available for the audit of OWNCS and file annual taxes for OWNCS PTO.

#### **4.6 – Fundraising Chairperson**

The Fundraising Chairperson, in conjunction with the Co-Chairpersons, shall guide and coordinate fundraising activities for OWNCS PTO, and recruit event-specific chairpersons and volunteers. The Fundraising Chairperson shall evaluate and research the viability of all fundraisers, The Fundraising Chairperson shall serve as the initial PTO point of contact for new fundraising proposals. The Fundraising Chairperson shall run the annual auction. The Fundraising Chairperson shall provide updates and information at all general and executive monthly meetings.



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#### **4.7 – Teacher Representatives**

Two Teacher Representatives will share responsibility for acting as liaisons between teachers and the PTO Executive Committee. Teacher Representatives may attend PTO Executive Committee meetings at their discretion.

#### **Section 5 – Non-Voting Officers**

The Executive Committee shall elect additional non-voting officers on an as needed basis. The non-voting officers shall include, but are not limited to: Box Tops Coordinator, Webmaster, and Photographer. Non-Voting Officers may attend PTO Executive Committee meetings at their discretion.

#### **ARTICLE VI – Class Parents**

Class Parents will collect and maintain phone and e-mail information for parents and guardians in their designated class. There may be 2 Co-Class Parents to share responsibilities. Class Parents will communicate with teachers on a regular basis as needed to assess classroom/teacher needs. Class Parents will contact parents and guardians with information such as classroom needs, volunteer opportunities within the classroom, and/or needs for a class party, activity or project. Class Parents will report to their Grade Representatives. Class Parents are non-voting members of the Executive Committee. Class Parents will represent their grade when asked by the Grade Representative to serve as his/her proxy to Executive Committee or general PTO meetings.

#### **ARTICLE VII – Election of Board Members**

##### **Section 1 - Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee shall consist of up to three PTO members, who will not stand for an elected office. The members will be selected by the general membership, or may volunteer, at the April general PTO meeting. The committee shall select its chairperson.

The Nominating Committee shall disseminate a slate at the beginning of May for the nomination of Executive Committee candidates. No nominations may be made from the floor at the meeting in which election results are announced, unless the office is without any candidate.



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### **1.1 – Ballot**

A Ballot shall be distributed school-wide not less than 14 days prior to the date at which ballots will be counted. The Ballot shall list all candidates under the office for which each candidate is nominated, and state the date and time of the June general meeting.

### **1.2 – Election**

Ballots shall be counted by members of the Nominating Committee at a date and time agreed upon by said committee. Neither members of the current PTO Executive Board nor candidates running for a PTO Board position, may be present during the counting of ballots. Election results will be announced at the June general meeting.

### **1.3 – Vacancies**

Vacancies occurring during the term of office shall be filled by appointment by the Co-Chairpersons with approval of the general PTO membership. In the event of vacancies of both Co-Chairpersons, the Executive Committee will appoint the positions with the approval of the general membership.

## **Section 2 – Disciplinary Action**

Any officer who fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Executive Committee without good cause may be removed from office by recommendation of the Executive Committee and vote of the general membership.

Officers and Executive Committee members accused of founded acts of misconduct or neglect of duty may be removed only after a vote of the general membership.

## **ARTICLE VIII – Meetings**

### **Section 1 – General PTO Membership Meetings**

**1.1** – A schedule of proposed general membership meeting dates shall be prepared by the Executive Committee and approved by the OWNCS Executive Director. The schedule shall be posted on the OWNCS PTO website and the OWNCS calendar on the school’s website. Notice of each membership meeting shall go out via e-mail and/or flyer five (5) days prior the scheduled meeting.

**1.2** – Regular meetings will be held the first Friday of each month of the school year at 8:00am at the Elementary School, unless the first Friday of the month falls on a designated vacation day or unless prior notice is given to the general membership. At the request of the general membership, a monthly evening meeting may also be held.



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**1.3** – At least six (6) Executive Committee meetings shall be held from September through May each school year. The Executive Committee meeting shall be held in the week prior to the general meeting.

### **Section 2 – Quorum**

A quorum of ten (10) members of the PTO shall be required to conduct business at the general membership meetings.

### **Section 3 – Special Membership Meetings**

Special membership meetings may be called to deal with a matter, or matters, of importance that cannot be held until the next general membership meeting. The Co-Chairpersons may call a special membership meeting with a minimum of 48 hours e-mail or written notice to parents, stating the precise topic or topics of the meeting.

## **ARTICLE IX – Executive Committee**

### **Section 1 – Composition**

The Executive Committee shall consist of the elected executive officers.

### **Section 2 – Responsibilities**

The Executive Committee shall set the agenda for all of the general PTO meetings and shall transact all necessary business between regular meetings. The Executive Committee shall assist in selecting Class Parents for a one-year term.

### **Section 3 – Ad Hoc Committees**

There shall be ad hoc committees designated by the Executive Committee as necessary to carry out the objective of the PTO.

### **Section 4 – Meetings**

Regular meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held each month in the week prior to the general membership meeting. The meetings are open to the general membership. In situations where this date is unavailable, the Executive Committee will set another date and time of the meeting.

### **Section 5 – Quorum**

A quorum of eight (8) members of the Executive Committee shall be required to conduct business at Executive Committee meetings.



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## **ARTICLE X – Other Committees**

### **Section 1 – Standing Committees**

The Executive Committee, as may be required to promote the objectives and interests of OWNCS PTO, shall create Standing Committees. The Standing Committees may include, but are not limited to the following committees:

#### **1.1 – Fundraising**

Purpose: To help plan and execute all fundraising activities approved by membership.

#### **1.2 – Volunteer Program**

Purpose: To encourage and help organize parents to be involved in the school.

#### **1.3 – Hospitality**

Purpose: To plan and prepare ways to make parents, children and staff in the school feel welcome and included. This includes planning teachers' luncheons.

#### **1.4 – Community/Public Relations**

Purpose: To encourage and organize the interaction of OWNCS and OWNCS PTO with the community and cultural institutions and/or businesses in order to promote a positive and healthy relationship between them.

Each Committee shall have a chairperson, who does not serve on the Board of Trustees and who shall be elected by the members of each committee, with final approval of the Executive Committee.

It shall be the responsibility of committee chairs to schedule committee meetings as necessary, notify members, organize activities, maintain accurate records and report monthly to the Executive Board and general membership.

The Chairperson of the Fundraising Committee will coordinate and confer with the school's Executive Director and, when necessary or requested, the chair of the Development Committee of the Board of Trustees.

### **Section 2 – Ad Hoc Committees**

**2.1** – Where an issue arises which necessitates the formation of a committee, an ad hoc committee may be established by the Executive Committee and dissolved when the need for the committee no longer exists.



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**2.2** – The Co-Chairpersons, with the approval of the Executive Committee, shall appoint the chair of any ad hoc committee.

**2.3** – Chairpersons of ad hoc committees shall have the same responsibilities as set forth in ARTICLE X, Section 1, above.

## **ARTICLE XI – Financial Affairs**

### **Section 1 – Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of OWNCS PTO shall run from July 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>.

The budget for the following year shall be voted on by the general membership by June of the preceding fiscal year.

### **Section 2 – Signatories**

The two (2) Co-Chairpersons shall be authorized to sign checks. This requires the Co-Chairpersons to be the sole persons listed on the OWNCS PTO bank account. All checks written by OWNCS PTO require at least TWO (2) signatures. No person will be able to sign a check written to him or herself.

### **Section 3 – Fundraising**

**3.1** – PTO fundraisers for the following school year shall be presented at a general PTO membership meeting by June of the preceding year, prior to the signing of contracts or agreements and pursuant to planning with the chair of the Development Committee of the Board of Trustees (when necessary or requested) and with the Executive Director (when necessary and requested). This includes all fundraisers involving students during school hours.

**3.2** – Upon approval of the membership, the committees responsible for their fundraisers shall be responsible for all arrangements, notices, committee assignments and other logistical details in preparation of the fundraising activity.

**3.3** – The Treasurer, at least one other officer and additional persons as needed, shall be designated and approved by the Executive Committee to collect, count, tally and record all orders and payments regarding each major fundraising activity.



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**3.4** – The (2) Co-Chairpersons or Treasurer shall arrange to deposit all receipts by the end of the school day, when possible. Two (2) persons shall confirm the amount of all deposits prior to transport to the bank. Deposit slips, or other documents, shall identify the source of all monies deposited. Copies of such deposits will be submitted to the Treasurer and each said officer involved in taking, counting and tallying funds.

**3.5** – The Chair or Co-Chairs of the fundraising committees shall prepare a report for each fundraiser, to be filed in the PTO's office and reported at a general membership meeting.

**3.6** – No such part of the net earning of OWNCS PTO shall be used for the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, board of trustees and committee members or other private persons, except that OWNCS PTO shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered or for payment of goods in further support of our objectives set forth in ARTICLE II hereof.

#### **Section 4 – Audit**

**4.1** – At the May general meeting, the Co-Chairpersons shall request volunteers from the general membership to form a three (3)-person audit committee.

**4.2** – The audit committee shall prepare an audit of all financial affairs of OWNCS PTO with the help of the Treasurer, who shall make all books and records available to them.

**4.3** – The audit committee shall prepare a written report to be presented to the membership at the October meeting.

#### **Section 5 – Financial Accounting**

**5.1** – OWNCS PTO shall prepare an interim financial accounting by March 1<sup>st</sup> and an annual financial accounting by June 30<sup>th</sup> of all income and expenditures. Federal and state income taxes shall be filed by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

**5.2** – A copy of the accounting or a summary thereof must be filed with the Executive Director's office and offered to all parents via the PTO website and/or e-mail.

**5.3** – No expenditures over \$500.00 that have not been previously approved in the budget by the general membership may be dispersed. The general membership must approve, on a case-by-case basis, where unexpected expenditures arise over \$500.00, not including expenses related to fundraisers or community building events. Expenditures under \$500.00 shall be considered part of petty cash, and distributed at the discretion of the Executive Committee.



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## **ARTICLE XII – Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution within OWNCS PTO shall be at the discretion of the Executive Committee. However, if a specified conflict is not resolved in this manner, an ad hoc Conflict Resolution Committee may be formed. The committee shall consist of a chairperson and two (2) other members of OWNCS PTO and shall be selected by the Executive Committee, with the approval of the general membership.

### **Section 1 – Conflict Resolution Procedures**

**1.1** – OWNCS PTO is not the mechanism by which conflicts at large are dealt with. See the grievance policy in the OWNCS Code of Conduct.

**1.2** – All conflicts, disputes and/or grievances regarding any aspect of the PTO’s conduct, composition, expenditures or other dealings shall be filed with the Co-Chairs or any member of the Conflict Resolution Committee, who shall bring such matter to the attention of the committee chairperson. If at all possible, the conflict, dispute or grievance should be made in writing and signed by the party raising the issue. All such matters will be treated as confidential unless the party raising the issue consents the release of information or there exists some lawful reason for releasing the information raised by the party.

**1.3** – Within ten (10) business days (exclusive of school vacations or holidays) of receiving the matter, the Executive Committee or Conflict Resolution Committee will meet to discuss the matter. The party raising the issue does not have an absolute right to meet with the committee. However, if necessary, the committee, in its discretion, can elect to meet with such party, for further clarification of the issue or issues raised. The committee can also elect to meet with any other parties, if such is necessary to the resolution of the matter. All meetings may take place via telephone conference calls.

**1.4** – If the Executive Committee or Conflict Resolution Committee can resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the party raising the issue, no further action need take place. The committee will make a written notation of the resolution of the matter and mark the file closed. The closed file will remain in the custody of the chairperson of the committee for the following two (2) consecutive school years, after which point such file will be destroyed.

**1.5** – If the matter cannot be resolved by either committee to the satisfaction of the party raising the issue, the matter shall be referred to the Executive Committee at the next Executive Committee meeting following the initial 10 day consideration period. At the point, the matter will become public vis-à-vis OWNCS PTO, as the Executive



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Committee meetings are open to the general membership. The Executive Committee will allot time at this meeting to meet with the party and will attempt to resolve the matter. If the matter is resolved, the Executive Committee and/or Conflict Resolution Chairperson will make a written notation of the resolution of the matter and will mark the file closed. The closed file will be maintained as set forth in Section 2.3 of this article.

**1.6** – If, after meeting with the Executive Committee, the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the party raising the issue, such party may file a complaint with the school’s Executive Director.

**1.7** – If, after meeting with the Executive Director, the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the party raising the issue, such party may pursue resolution via the grievance policy outlined in OWNCS Code of Conduct.

### **ARTICLE XIII – Amendments**

These by-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at a general membership meeting. All proposed amendments must be publicized to the general membership by written flier, e-mail or posted on the PTO website at least ten (10) days prior to the general meeting, at which voting on the amendments will take place. Amendments are effective immediately.



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## **OWNCS PTO Executive Committee Pledge**

As a member of OWNCS PTO Executive Committee, I pledge

1. That the future welfare of OWNCS depends on the quality of education we provide in the school to fit the needs of every learner.
2. That my fellow committee members and I must take the initiative in helping all the participants in our school community to have all the facts all the time about our school, to the end that they will readily provide the finest possible school program, school staff and school facilities.
3. To devote time, thought and study to the duties and responsibilities of a school committee member so that I may render effective and creditable service.
4. To work with my fellow committee members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that arise vigorous debate of points of issue.
5. To base my personal decisions upon all available facts in each situation; to vote my honest conviction in every case, thereafter, to abide by and uphold the final majority decision of the Executive Committee.
6. To remember at all times that as an individual I have no legal authority outside the meetings of the committee, and to conduct my relationship with the school staff, the local citizenry and all media of communication on the basis of this fact.
7. To bear in mind under all circumstances that the primary function of the Executive Committee is to support the policies by which the school is to be administrated in order to fulfill its mission, but that the administration of the educational program and the conduct of school business shall be left to the employed Executive Director of the school and his/her professional and non-professional staff.

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OWNCS PTO Executive Committee

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Date