

How To Build A Successful School Community

THAT WILL GROW, THRIVE AND GENERATE FUNDS NOW AND FOR YEARS TO COME.



Classlist

This book covers everything you need to know to build a thriving school community: from essential first steps to proven strategies for growth, engagement and successful fundraising. It's been written by the team at Classlist, the secure, online platform developed to help parents within a school community contact and interact with one another.

Classlist is already used in 36 countries and in over 10% of school communities in the UK. In the following pages we'll share the secrets and insights uncovered by our Ambassadors – the parents and community leaders who've used our software to build flourishing and self-sustaining networks in their schools.

Our analysis of thousands of school communities shows that it takes just 21 days to build a dynamic online group that benefits parents; children and schools. It reveals the strategies that lead to success. Whether you're a Class Rep; a parent association member; an active parent volunteer, a governor or a staff member, this book has been written for you. Welcome to the Classlist community.

Susan and Clare
Classlist's Founders



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What is a strong school community?

School communities vary enormously. They're influenced by culture, location, tradition and social economics. But there are characteristics that all strong school communities share. These schools have forged a positive partnership between staff and parents; parents contribute in meaningful ways to the school and the subsequent increase in family engagement helps to support better educational outcomes for students[1].

[1] Harvard Business School; Oxford University, Parent Engagement Fund; Sutton Trust, Parent Power; Australian Government

The Classlist checklist for a thriving school community:

- Pupils are happy, have a healthy mix of friends and therefore are doing well both academically and pastorally.
- Parents know each other by name and get a chance to meet in real life.
- Parents feel comfortable asking for help from others and can expect if they ask a question or seek help.
- Parents can 'belong' regardless of whether they can make it to the school gate every day.
- School staff feel supported by their parents and can access the many talents they have to offer, whether dealing with lost property, volunteering to listen to new readers, helping with traffic or offering work experience and work inspiration.
- Volunteers are many, diverse and representative of the school's pupil population.
- Real time get togethers are frequent, across the whole or by class.



**Dixie
Stafford,
Chair of the
Parent
Association
at St Albans
High School
for Girls,
Hertfordshire**

Dixie Stafford describes what makes a strong school community

“A strong community makes parents’ lives easier. In the early years of school, a good parent network helps children develop their school friendships outside of school through play dates and helps to easily resolve queries about issues such as homework. For parents with older children - who start venturing further afield to parties and concerts - being able to contact other children’s parents when needed can be very reassuring for safeguarding.

Plus, when parents feel connected to each other and new parents are warmly welcomed into the group, they will tend, over time, to put more into the school. This can be in a range of ways: volunteering in the classroom; helping to run mock interviews for sixth formers; managing lost property; organising second-hand school uniform sales and, importantly, supporting fundraising initiatives to benefit the school.”

What are the obstacles that prevent strong school communities forming?

School communities depend on parents being able to meet one another and meet the school staff. Parents are highly motivated to support their children's schools, but modern trends make it harder to communicate and engage with the whole parent body:

- Data privacy has placed new restrictions on sharing information.
- The trend for both parents to work is rising. In 2018, 72.5% of families had both adults in work[1]. Working adults have less opportunity to engage with the school community.
- The rise in blended families adds complexity for parents and the school to communicate with the right person.
- There has been a rise in co-parenting, with more dads wanting to get involved with their children's schools. It can be more challenging for them to access the traditional informal parent networks.
- From the schools' perspective, the multiple expectations and the time restrictions on the educational day mean that staff do not necessarily have the time, energy or resources to invest heavily in the parent body.
- [1] Office for National Statistics, Families and the Labour Market, England: 2018

But here's the good news. Technology can help to overcome these obstacles...

Although many parents find it challenging to meet one another physically at their children's schools, software can be used to connect them.

Technology like Classlist can improve and build school communities with limited resources and cost. These online communities promote real-life connections: helping parents to meet, support each other and their school.



Connecting through Classlist

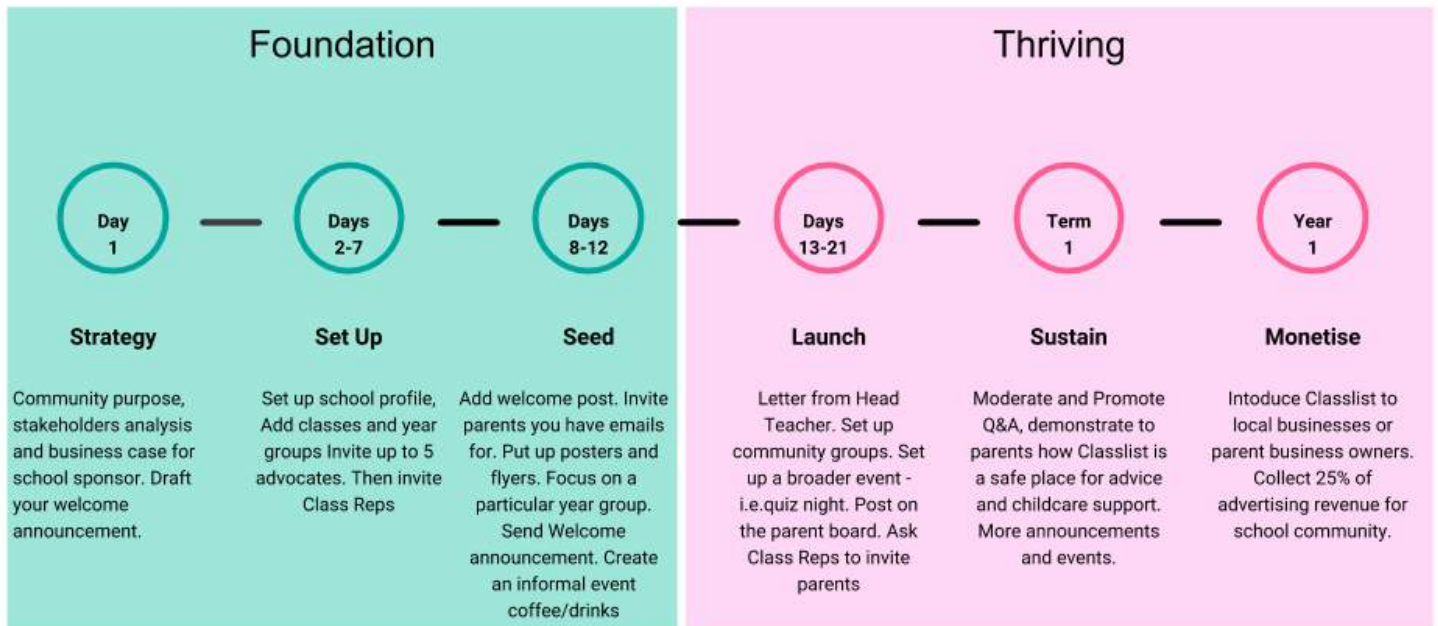
"Classlist has been really effective. It is very inclusive for all our families and resolves the burning issue of connecting parents to each other." **Lynn Knapp, Head of Windmill Primary School, Oxford**

"Classlist has fundamentally transformed our parents' ability to organise events, fundraise and communicate." **Richard Murray, Head Teacher, Christ Church Cathedral School**

"As an international school with three upper school campuses, our PTA plays a pivotal role in developing and maintaining a sense of community at Southbank International School. GDPR happened right as our PTA was searching for a digital solution for our parent directory and identifying Classlist as that solution has paid dividends in more ways that we expected. Not only do we have a more efficient way to on-board new families, we have moved all PTA communications and the management of all of our social clubs & events onto the platform. With 90% of our families participating in less than one year, we are confident that we can reach everyone with important announcements while also offering an extension of the community we so value into a virtual space. At the same time, our two lower school campuses continue to deploy Classlist and increase participation from their parents. We're still learning to maximize the platform to our advantage and we have appreciated the responsive support we receive from their Help Desk when we run into issues or have suggestions. We are extremely happy with Classlist!" **Jennifer Harrell, Communications Chair, Southbank International School (Westminster)**



Community Growth Pathway



So, what does it take to build a strong school community?

At Classlist, we've worked with thousands of schools. After analysing the actions they've taken to build their communities, we've found that the schools with the most successful outcomes all followed the same six-step pattern of growth. Here's an overview of what's involved. Over the coming pages we'll explore each step in greater depth.

Foundation to Growth



Step One: Strategy.

Start by looking at the needs of your school community. Run a stakeholder analysis; create a clear, shared definition of the purpose your school community will serve and write a business case for your sponsor on the school staff.

Step Two: Set-Up

Don't expect too much at this stage. You want to start small. Create your school profile, making it as welcoming and useful as possible. Then trial it with a mini-group of enthusiastic parents/ staff.

Step Three: Seed

This is the slow and sometimes challenging step of inviting parents to join the community. Commitment, enthusiasm and inclusiveness will see membership start to reach a tipping point: with parents becoming aware of the community and starting to sign up.

Step Four: Launch

It's time to capitalise on the interest you've created. Set up dedicated parental interest groups on the site - dog-lovers/ music lessons/ cake bakers - and organise social events. Your aim is to recruit over 100 members: enough for the group to self-seed.

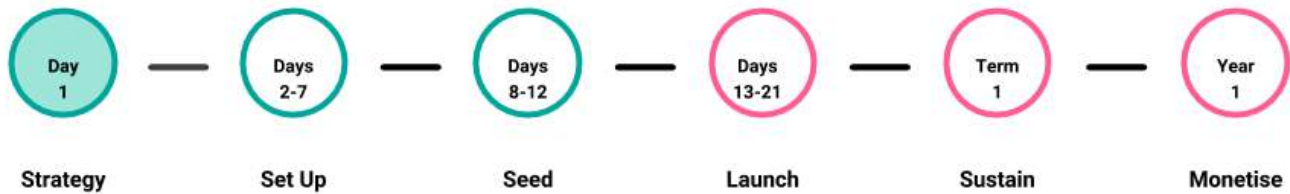
Step Five: Sustain

From our data, once 70% of parents have signed up to your online community and you have more than fifty parents a week active on the site, your community will be self-sustaining. Now is the time to use a combination of online and offline initiatives to demonstrate that the community is a safe space that will benefit its members.

Step Six: Monetise

Once your community is thriving, make the most of the site by using it to raise funds that will benefit your school.

Step One: Day One - STRATEGY



Understand the nature of your school

The first step in building a thriving school community is to think about the nature of your school and how it works. This will determine how you approach and collaborate with the staff and the parents. Here are some useful questions to ask:

- Is your current school community centrally controlled by the school or not?
- Does the location of your school enable plenty of face to face time at the school gate or do space constraints discourage any spontaneous interaction?
- Does your school have a strong culture ingrained by years of tradition or is its culture evolving?
- Do children walk to school or are they driven?
- Is there parking nearby or is traffic congestion relating to the school run a problem?
- What is the late pickup policy of your school?
- What is the ratio of stay-at-home vs working parents?
- Are Class Reps appointed by the school or are they parent volunteers?
- Is the PTA Headship rotated every few years or longer term?
- What are the fundraising objectives of your school?

Think about purpose

The purpose that will be served by the school community could be:

- Social. Parents and children gaining friendship networks.
- Educational. Encouraging parental engagement to help raise pupil attainment.
- Financial. Encouraging parental engagement to raise funds for the school.
- All of the above.

Undertake a stakeholder analysis

It's now time to undertake a stakeholder analysis and to consider who is influential and likely to engage with the need for a thriving school community.

Is it the head? Is it a key member of staff? Or is it the PTA, the Class Reps or a group of community-minded parents?

This is important because your stakeholders will determine whether you adopt a top-down approach to building your community (asking the school, early on, to promote the online community) or a bottom-up approach (getting a decisive number of parents onboard before involving the school). Think about how you can actively involve your stakeholders, so that they become advocates for the community. A helpful way to get staff onboard is to share this clip of [Head Teacher testimonials](#).

Write a business case for your sponsor on the school staff

A successful school community relies on buy-in from staff. Even if you already have an enthusiastic advocate within the school, you need to write a business case to help them demonstrate the benefits of investing in the wider community. This business case should outline the benefits for the school and is a useful way to get buy-in early with Senior School Staff

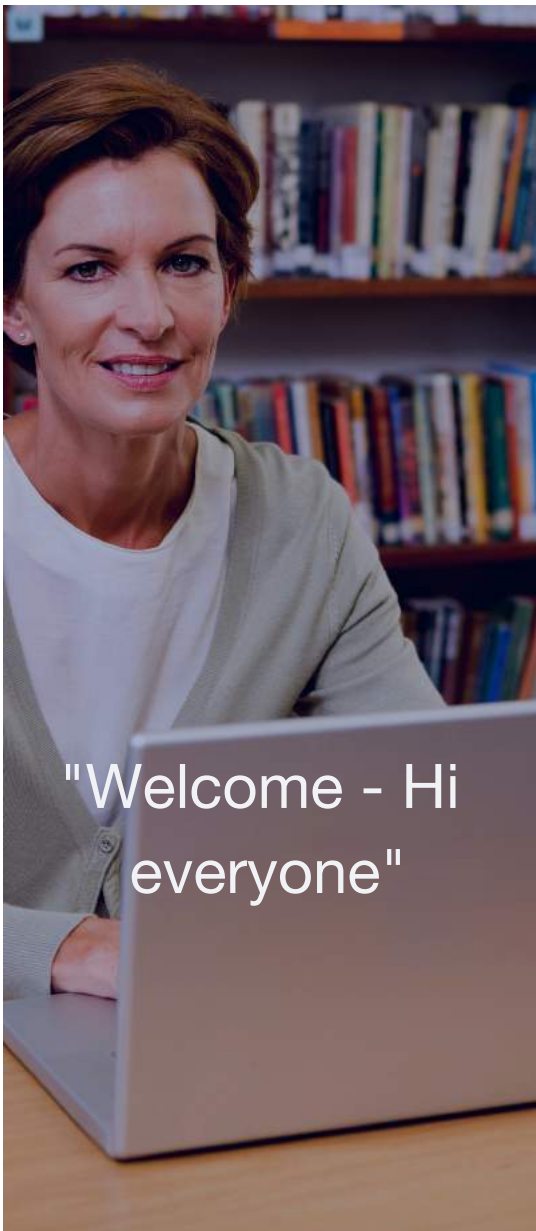
Ways in which Classlist can help schools

- GDPR compliance
- Efficient communications: reach parents by mobile and track message effectiveness
- Improve parent engagement
- Recruit volunteers to listen to reading or help with after school activities
- Offer a safer way for parents to share contact details
- Containable discussions (no social network sharing buttons)
- Outsource agent for data protection responsibilities
- Save staff administrative time and money communicating PTA/PA/Friends activities and managing lost property (in UK £200m lost property p.a.)
- Raise funds for bursaries and school equipment
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Helps pupils settle into the school and make friends
- Clear guidelines for desired and prohibited behaviour online.
- Entirely free for users – costs are covered by sponsorship from a small number of carefully selected, parent-focused businesses.

Write a welcome post

Your welcome post 'sets the tone' of your online community as a place that's friendly, inclusive and supportive. When you're thinking about what to write, look at your purpose. Share the ideas about what you want to achieve: whether that's improving communication, helping parents schedule diaries for after school clubs more easily or ensuring children make friends.

Here are some examples:



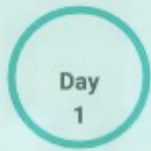
Hi everyone and thanks so much for joining! You can invite other parents in your class by sending them a link to www.classlist.com and telling them about it - it would be really good to get everyone to sign up and make this work brilliantly for everyone!

'Welcome - Hi everyone. It's great to see everyone starting to sign up to use Classlist. Particularly so many dads joining. Thank you for adding a photo and making it easier to put a face to a name,'

Hi - welcome to Classlist. I hope you find it interesting and can see how it would help reach out to parents. The two big advantages I can see are: a) no one has access to personal data (so no funny mail-outs!) and b) you can post message on here which will go out to the specified group. For me, it means I can post messages about matches which will get to everyone on the netball team's mobile via the Classlist App. That means I shouldn't need to field so many phone calls every Saturday morning!

Summary

Strategy

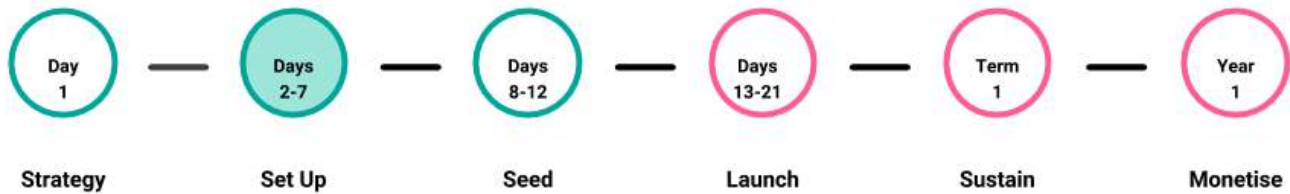


Day
1

- Define community purpose,
- Stakeholders analysis
- Business case for school sponsor.
- Draft your welcome announcement.

Strategy

Step Two: Days 2 - 7 - SET-UP



Step Two should last around six days. The emphasis at this stage is on personalising your Classlist community and building a small team (up to five people) to trial the site. During this trial phase your evangelist members can try out different features, add in upcoming school events, even create an informal meetup at a local coffee shop or drink after work.

Personalise your Classlist community

Complete the personal and school profile pages. Make sure you add a photo of yourself, your children, their classes. Photos are important because they help to put names to faces, which builds the sense of community. If you can, add your school's logo (a clear indication to other parents that they're in the right place!); your reason for wanting to build your school community; any community guidelines; pages to link to such as the school's website.

You should also start posting some content. Examples include:

- Market Place - babysitters - any of your parents have 15-16 year-olds who would like to earn some extra pocket money?
- Events coming up in the school diary
- Your welcome post to new joiners
- Questions and requests for feedback/ suggestions are always a good way to encourage engagement.

Classlist Guidelines

Classlist has a set of clear guidelines for desired and prohibited behaviour. They are:

- We created Classlist because we believe that our childrens' school is one of the most important and useful communities in a person's life.
- We believe in the traditional notion of community as people who help and look out for each other. We hope that Classlist members embrace the concept of being inclusive and supportive of each other. We never share your info with advertisers. In turn, we expect members:
 - To respect fellow class parents, which includes not using their contact details for marketing or professional purposes.
 - To be honest, authentic, and straightforward in all actions.
 - Not to share information from the website without the author's permission.
 - To maintain the privacy and security of the site by creating a unique password and keeping this safe.
 - Not to use the website to complain about the school or individuals connected with the school.
- We track and act upon all member reports and there is a report button on every member profile.

Create your trial team

A mistake we sometimes see is an Ambassador that 'goes it alone'. For your community to thrive you need to start with a small group of advocates. We recommend you roll out a pilot trial of Classlist with up to five others, possibly including a staff member and two Class reps.

Here is a checklist for identifying the kind of qualities you should be looking out for in your initial advocates

Candidates scoring less than **five** 'trues' are likely to be a reluctant advocate. A score of more than **eight** should be your minimum standard. If someone scores above **fifteen**, congratulations, your job has just become easier. Do let this advocate know that he/ she has the potential to develop a career in community management.



- I am outgoing and like making new friends
- I will introduce myself to people I don't know at a party and make them feel included in the conversation
- I am good at communicating face to face
- I enjoy meeting parents at the school gate
- I am good at communicating by email or messaging
- I enjoy arranging get-togethers, coffee mornings and drinks
- I have a flexible time table so I can meet up for social gatherings with other parents
- I am diplomatic, can moderate and deter negativity from the minority
- I enjoy sharing tips and advice related to children and parenting
- I enjoy fundraising
- I am confident about using computers
- I am naturally organised and think ahead, other parents often ask me what is going on at the school where and when
- I read all school correspondence immediately
- I regularly use social networks to connect with friends and family
- I use online calendars and diaries and can import appointments
- I can upload and share photos and video online
- I can create digital newsletters and manage electronic mailing lists
- I have run fundraising auctions using cloud based platforms
- I am motivated to help my children's school thrive in any way I can
- I am willing to commit time to create a stronger school and parent community
- I see the value that parents can contribute to the school and to each other



Classlist

This stage of your community is critical. These early evangelists or advocates provide the foundation for how your community looks and feels. They should be people you can count on to participate, who will have an interest in the success of the community. Their enthusiasm sets the tone for your parent base and you want a warm, friendly atmosphere. For those that you know well speak to them by phone or in person, explaining what you are trying to achieve. For others send a personal email or personal invitation message via Classlist.

For example:

Hi Clare,

My name is Emma Smith, I am writing to you because I noticed that you [held a coffee morning for new parents in your class, which was really appreciated]. I'm [on the parent association] and am trialling Classlist, a tool that helps parents connect safely and build school community conversations. I really want to encourage parents to offer advice and help each and help school staff. I actually spoke to [Head parent] who recommended you. I was wondering if you would like to take part in the pre-launch trial. This involves registering on our school site, commenting on a few posts and experimenting with some of the features. And if you know of anyone else who you think should be involved, that would be great too.



You could also highlight some of the reasons why parents join Classlist. It:

- Helps pupils (and parents) to settle into the school and make friends
- Facilitates event management: from arranging birthday parties to fundraising events
- Helps parents coordinate childcare and clubs
- Allows parents to seek recommendations and advice
- Widens the school's pool of volunteers
- Raises funds for bursaries and school equipment
- Is entirely free for users – costs are covered by sponsorship from a small number of carefully selected, parent-focused businesses.

If you don't get a response, move onto the next name on your list of key influencers you identified earlier. After a small group of five have accepted, encourage everyone to post content before you open the community officially.

Work with your five advocates individually to ensure that they have:

- Completed profiles (especially their photo as this sets the standard for other parents when they join),
- Engaged in the way you would like others to engage.
- Interacted with other early members. Later on, the level of interaction will be a critical factor in the success of your community. When over 10% of your members contribute (it's called a contributor/consumer ratio), you will be on your way to a flourishing network. So, even at this early stage, it's worth emphasising the need for interaction.



What motivates your initial advocates?

You will find that some of your early advocates are motivated to get involved with the school community because they want to see the impact of their efforts

A successful fun event, money raised, their children proud that their parents are involved. Some may be motivated by the opportunity to build their networks and make friends, while others appreciate the chance to learn new skills and build their CVs.

Broaden your reach

We recommend spending two-three days trialling Classlist with this small group of five advocates.

Ask them to create posts, comments and events that will make the new community seem welcoming and useful. It's worth including answers to some common questions for new parents, which will help them feel welcomed and able to integrate with the school community. These could include:

- How does school pick-up work?
- Where is lost property?
- When do Parent Consultations happen?

You also want to ask this group for feedback and take in their suggestions. Once you've done this, we recommend inviting PTA/ Parent Association members and Class Reps to join the trial. These parents are already committed to helping the school community to thrive and are likely to be helpful advocates.

Any member to whom you assign Ambassador and Class Rep status becomes part of an automated group on Classlist, which can be used for private discussions. This will become helpful when your community grows larger.



Becoming a community leader builds your CV

Companies including Apple, Airbnb, Spotify, eBay, Etsy, MacMillan and Fitbit all employ talented individuals that can build, grow and manage communities.

A track record in building community opens doors to numerous opportunities, with job opportunities in the community space ranging from:

- Participating in a product development team
- Coordinating marketing, PR and branding to ensure brand consistency
- Digital marketing
- Building relationships with customers and stakeholders
- Management of real-life engagement and events
- Creating engaging content for members

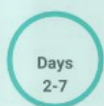
People motivated by learning new skills, can also earn Classlist accreditation. We recommend adding the following to your **LinkedIn profile**:

Ambassador, Classlist

As an accredited UK Classlist Ambassador, I have a proven track record in building, seeding and launching online communities. I am skilled at developing engaging content, moderating user generated posts, running successful community events, recruiting and managing volunteers. I trial new features and give feedback to the Classlist development team when necessary.

Summary

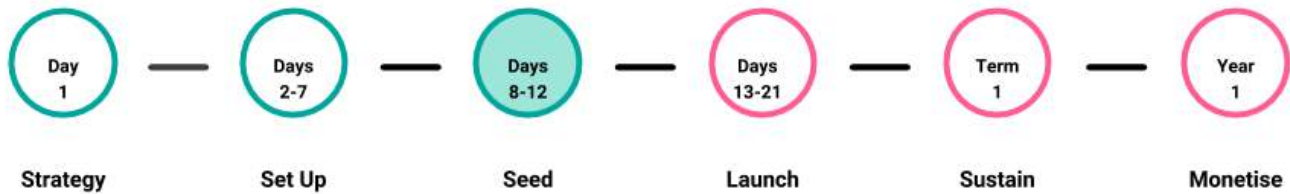
Setup



- Set up school profile,
- Add classes and year groups
- Invite up to 5 advocates.
- Then invite Class Reps

Setup

Step Three: Days 8-12 - SEED



The process of seeding can be challenging. During these early days there are only a few members of the community, with correspondingly few discussions and reactions to posted content. Plus, your members are unsure about what they're 'allowed' to post or ask of others.

New parents

The best way to approach this phase is to identify the cohort of parents who are most likely to be keen members of the group: from our experience these are the NEW parents, who have children entering either nursery or reception in a primary or prep school or Years 7 or 9 in a secondary school.

In these transition years parents are highly motivated to ensure their children make friends, they are open to new friendships themselves and they are keen to support the school and volunteer.

How do you convince people to join?

Motivating people to join and participate is the key to the success of your community. In this second week of activity we recommend aiming to recruit 40 new members. Reasons to join:

- Your Classlist community is the BEST source of relevant and complete information for parents at your school
- Your community is the BEST source of trustworthy recommendations about local services
- Your community provides news on new events before any other channel
- Your community provides the most up to date information or the only source about what is happening at the school. In other words more reliable than other social media.
- Your community is a place where experts can get recognition for sharing their knowledge
- Participating in your community gives exclusive access to private areas and content
- Your community is a place where parents who share a passion can meet.

Use this list as inspiration to build your own list of 'member benefits' and use these reasons across your different communications messages.

Stay grounded

It's important to have realistic expectations about the speed at which your new community will grow.

At this stage, instead of focusing on numbers, focus on encouraging activity: members posting and interacting with one another. That will make your site vibrant and that will bring new members in through word of mouth. There will always be some parents who act as blockers: objecting and resisting the new community because it's different. Don't worry about them. Focus on the parents who are interested in trying the site.



Use the right words

For the best take-up rates, make sure your communications:

- Focus on a single message. Members can benefit in many ways from joining your community, but every communication you create for a specific audience should focus on one message. For new parents it might be the need to get information. Others may be more motivated by a desire to post about class-specific events.
- Always have a clear call-to-action (CTA). Give people clear guidance about what you want them to do. That may be to “visit your community”, to “ask a question” or to “share something”. Communications that contain clear CTAs deliver higher conversion rates.
- Are appropriate for the delivery channel. Ensure that your messages are succinct and important points are readable on mobile without any need to scroll or swipe.

Days 8-9

At the seeding stage you may - or may not - wish to involve your Head Teacher to inform parents about Classlist. Some schools start with a year group trial and then involve the Head. Others launch with an email to all parents from the Head. The approach you take will really depend on the stakeholder analysis you carried out during the Strategy Phase on Day One. Who did you identify within your community as influential and likely to engage with the need for a thriving school community?

If it was the Head or the Senior Leadership Team within the school, you may want to take the “top-down” approach to growing your community. If it was a group of parent volunteers, you may want to take the “bottom-up” approach. We have seen both approaches resulting in achieving 85% parents signing up.

Day-by-day actions to grow your community:

Day 8 - If “top-down”: If your Head is supportive and enthusiastic of building the community (something you’ll be able to assess during your initial conversation during the stakeholder analysis phase) you may be able to accelerate your launch by providing your Head Teacher/Principal with a draft letter to send out to parents. You’ll find the following sample text (plus follow-up letters) [here](#). Make sure the link you’re using to direct parents to join is correct and add links to the [Classlist App in the IOS store](#) and [Google Play store](#).

Day 8 - If “bottom up”: Invite the parents for whom you already have emails or can access on WhatsApp by using Classlist’s invite parents feature. You can upload emails that will send parents a direct link to your school’s Classlist site. One of the main benefits of this approach is that you start to communicate with parents immediately. These parents are classified as ‘Invited Parents’ and will receive your announcements and event invitations prior to joining. This gives you an opportunity to offer them an insight into the new and exciting parent community.

Day 9 - Welcome new joiners: Once you start inviting parents you’ll find that there will be a surge of joiners - usually around 25-30% of your community will sign up in the first few days. Welcome them, encourage them to add their profile information and make a particular point of highlighting new parents to the school. These new parents will be ones you will rely on for fundraising later down the line. Ask those who have joined to invite other parents in order to make their classes as complete and inclusive as possible. Direct them to the invitation button, so contacts can be added easily.

Peer invitations are extremely powerful for expanding your community membership. According to our data, at least a third of parents you invite will invite another parent.



Summary

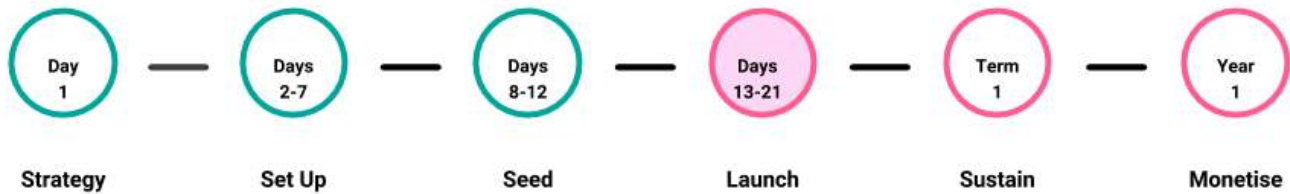
Seed

Days
8-12

Seed

- Add welcome post.
- Invite parents you have emails for.
- Put up posters and flyers.
- Focus on a particular year group.
- Send Welcome announcement.
- Create an informal event coffee/drinks

Step Four: Days 13-21 - Launch



In the coming week, your aim is to increase your community to 100 members. That's the point at which awareness will go viral and parents will encourage one another to sign up. Here's how you attract those new members...

Set up new community groups

Interest groups encourage people to socialise because you're attracting them with a subject that matters to them. Think about your community and what they might want or need. Your interest groups might include:

- Dog Lovers
- Volunteers
- Baking
- Fundraising ideas
- Book Club
- Running Club
- Does Anyone Know...
- Does Anyone Want...
- Lift Share
- Movie Club
- After School / Holiday Clubs



Organise Meet-In-Real- Life events

Your online community becomes self-sustaining and dynamic when it leads to and complements real world interaction.

When your members meet in person to socialise it builds trust and goodwill across your community. The event can be anything that you think will be popular with your community. We've found that events that include the whole family get the best take-up and that "Food Themed" gatherings - Scandinavian snaps night, Turkish/Japanese/Ethiopian coffee mornings, Curry and Noodle nights - are a great way of involving parents for whom English is a second language. Another way to get lots of parents along to an event is to get the students to organise the event for the adults (with adult supervision!).

Pinpoint the issues that matter

Keep an eye on the issues that matter to your community and respond to them with content that will keep them engaged

Keep an eye on the issues that matter to your community and respond to them with content that will keep them engaged. This could be about internet safety; teenage parties; homework; traffic congestion - you'll discover what matters to your community by reading their posts and speaking to them in person at your events.

Ask for school support

Staff may already be helping you to raise awareness. If they're not, now is the time to ask them to make an announcement about the new community: an effective option is an email from the Head Teacher. You'll find the following sample text (plus follow-up letters) [here](#).

Here is a sample letter

Dear [Parent]

Regular communication between parents is important in helping us build a supportive and welcoming school community. Recent data protection changes mean parents now rely on a variety of informal channels to contact each other, ranging from ad-hoc email lists to social media groups on Facebook and WhatsApp. These can work well but raise important concerns over inclusiveness, security and safeguarding - particularly when used to distribute personal data, and exchange information and images about children.

The school, working closely with our [parent association], has looked carefully at what might serve parent needs best in this area. This [Month] we are introducing a new "built for purpose" app called Classlist. This enables parents to find and contact each other securely, whilst giving each parent complete control over what data is shared. Classlist, which is UK based, holds appropriate security and GDPR certifications and recently won top prize at BETT, the world's largest education technology event.

Our parent community is of course much more than an online address book. Using Classlist you can set up events; form special interest groups; discuss arrangements for parties or liftshares; find a home for old bicycles or school blazers, and volunteer. There is even scope for the Friends to raise money through working with local sponsors who support the site, which is completely free to the school and to parents.

It takes a couple of minutes to get started - first download the [Classlist app on iOS or Android](#); select ("school name") and choose what data to share with your fellow parents.

We are launching the Classlist app today, in order to provide a warm welcome to new parents who will be joining shortly. I would encourage you to sign up as soon as possible and ideally no later than next Monday [insert date]. For parents whose pupils are leaving this year we will create an alumni group so you can stay in touch.

Best regards



Fast track members

Schools can also add parents to the site as pre-approved members. Our data shows that those schools that bulk upload emails using Classlist not only benefit from having parents pre-approved, these parents activate faster and therefore are more likely to invite other parents.

Classlist is ICO registered and GDPR compliant, so it is possible for staff to take a shortcut and add parents directly (rather than sending an email with a link to the Classlist corporate site). For schools that use ISAMs (a management information system) we can integrate directly with your school's data. This option carries a small charge.

Subscribe to the Ambassador and Class Rep Newsletter

Each newsletter includes a section of what is trending on Classlist across the world. If other schools are talking about something perhaps it is relevant to your school too?

Push the FOMO button

FOMO stands for Fear Of Missing Out. Remember when you were seeding your community and there were a few blockers: parents who didn't want to get involved with something new? This is the time to send them another invite to sign up. Send an email letting them know that everyone's joined and you don't want them to miss out on the Quiz Night, Term Party, children's birthday parties and playdates, bargains and holiday club suggestions. This inclusivity will pay off: we often find that the parents who were initially blockers become some of our most positive advocates.

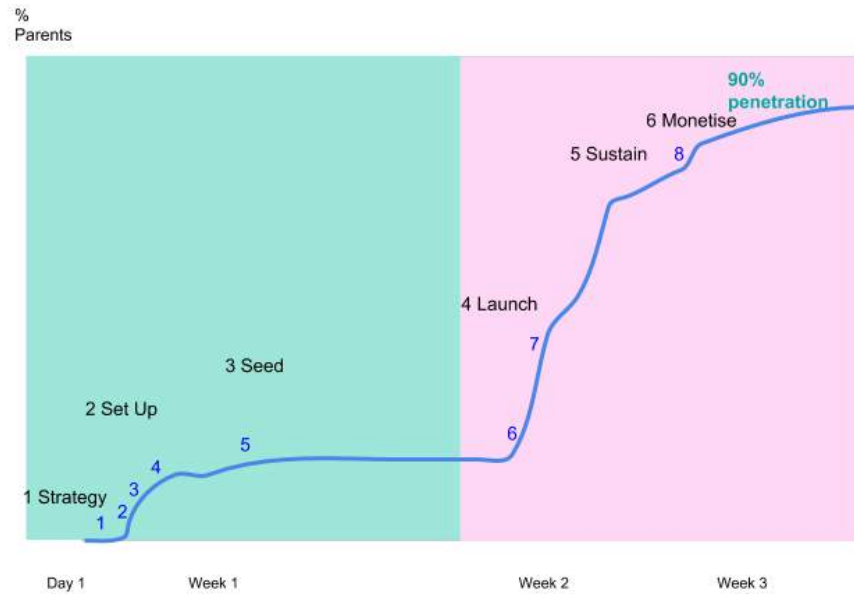
Check your progress

You can look at how your community is growing by using the Dashboard facility. By Day 21 many schools have got over 75% of their target group signed up. This graph shows the typical trajectory:



Typical Trajectory

1. Setup structure,
2. Seed with parent advocates and post welcome messages
3. Create welcome event
4. Advocates adding more reps
5. Parents posting and messaging
6. School launch
7. Parents inviting parents
8. Create announcement (FOMO)



Stay focused

Anecdotally, some of our successful Ambassadors have told us that refusing to post into other social media tools accelerated engagement and signups because parents weren't having to monitor different channels.

Your aim: To have over 50 members posting every week

Over 50 active members posting in the community every week is the tipping point for community sustainability. Keep encouraging that interaction!

Summary

Launch

Days
13-21

- Letter from Head Teacher.
- Set up community groups.
- Set up a broader event - i.e. quiz night.
- Post on the parent board.
- Ask Class Reps to invite parents

Launch

"Classlist is working brilliantly for us. We have found it really easy to sell event tickets, and also to get volunteers to help at the new joiners' days. When it snowed parents were able to let each other know early on Saturday that hockey was cancelled. Parents tell me they feel more part of the community. We love Classlist." **Susanne McGillivray, PA Chair, Kingston Grammar School**

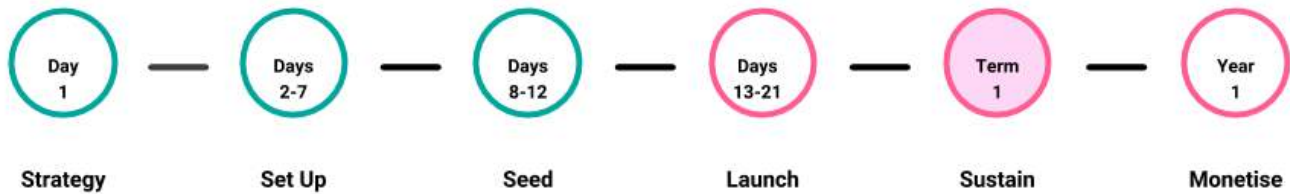
"Classlist is working amazingly well. I introduced it in September and it has made life so much easier for us. We are only a small school of seven classes, but we used to have a Facebook page, Whatsapp groups and email lists. Classlist has brought it all into one place. Now I only have to send one message instead of 14 or 21. It has changed our way of communicating, our way of doing things. My PTA Committee say, "Where did you find it?!" **Zafira Dewey, PTA Chair, St Aidan's RC Primary School**

"We have been surprised and delighted with the fast uptake by 1080 parents. We haven't even had to chase them. Launching Classlist was easy." **Lindsey Smith, Latymer Upper School**

"Enormously grateful to you for your invention. Invaluable to us for GDPR compliance!" **Abby Bennett, PTA Chair, Croydon High School GDST,**



Step Five: Term One - Sustain



Our data shows that once 70% of parents have signed up and you have more than fifty parents active on the site every week, your community will be self-sustaining. From this point on, the focus needs to be on:

- Making sure that the site is a positive place for parents
- Continuing to combine your online efforts with 'real world' events.

Making sure that the site is a positive place for parents

Ensuring that your community is a place where parents feel safe, respected and welcome means that the site moderators have to ensure that posts and comments are healthy and helpful. Direct moderation depends greatly on your judgement.

It's vital that you have first-hand knowledge of your parent base, your influencers and the culture of the community because this gives you a solid base for understanding issues and making decisions on where and how to respond. More importantly, those relationships provide critical connections for when you need to make tough calls.

Moderation

Three good moderation rules of thumb

- Assume good intent
- Use a neutral, but direct tone
- Don't fan emotional flames, good or bad

We do occasionally see examples where a parent will use Classlist to rally support for a particular concern. The most controversial issues we have observed are:

- School lunch policies, whether it is about the quality of the catering or what is deemed acceptable to include in a packed lunch.
- School's policy regarding vaccinations
- Traffic congestion around the school
- Mobile phone policy for pupils

Any comments about specific teachers and staff members need to be removed immediately, the member informed that the post has been removed and and Classlist guidelines referenced.

Classlist Guidelines

Classlist's guidelines are set out in Step Two: Setup. For clarity, here they are again:

- We created Classlist because we believe that our childrens' school is one of the most important and useful communities in a person's life.
- We believe in the traditional notion of community as people who help and look out for each other. We hope that Classlist members embrace the concept of being inclusive and supportive of each other. We never share your info with advertisers. In turn, we expect members:
 - To respect fellow class parents, which includes not using their contact details for marketing or professional purposes.
 - To be honest, authentic, and straightforward in all actions.
 - Not to share information from the website without the author's permission.
 - To maintain the privacy and security of the site by creating a unique password and keeping this safe.
 - Not to use the website to complain about the school or individuals connected with the school.
- We track and act upon all member reports and there is a report button on every member profile.

Dealing with negative users and feedback

Dealing with very negative users can be extremely challenging for moderators but ignoring them is rarely the best course of action. We advocate addressing negative users and their feedback. Even though you're unlikely to be able to convince a particular user, your reaction will improve the overall situation: other visitors will read your response and appreciate the fact that you are addressing the individual's concern. Managing conflict is never fun, but community moderators will have to roll up their sleeves and jump in from time to time.

Here is some advice for specific situations you may encounter, which will help you find better ways to handle negative users and feedback:

Be there for negative parents

People will have their reasons for expressing negativity. Nobody sits down and invests time and energy like that for no reason. So, the first thing to do is ask yourself is:

- What is this parent trying to achieve?
- Is there something I can do right now to ease his/her pain?

How to handle negative feedback about your moderation

After you've moderated a post and notified the user about it, you might receive a private message in which the parent will try to discuss the legitimacy of your moderation action or will ask for proof of rule-breaking. It is perfectly fine to give this information to them. Simply copy and paste the conflicting part of the comment into your reply (or describe what was said in case you have already deleted it) and add the exact part of your guidelines with which this comment was in conflict. After that? Do not engage in further discussions.

Discussing moderator actions in public

Should a parent try to discuss your moderator actions in public, delete the offending post right away to avoid undermining the credibility and authority of you and your community team. If you haven't already mentioned in your community guidelines or terms and conditions that discussing moderator actions is against the rules, then add this rule in right away!

Pro tips for moderators:

Write long public posts and short private messages

A long reply will restore the trust of your user (and other users who read it), as they'll see that you have invested significant time in sitting down and reflecting on the feedback. But when answering private messages, it's often better either to redirect the user to the public community for further discussion, or to keep your reply as short as possible. If you send a lengthy reply to a PM, expect a lengthy one back!

Show empathy

We're not talking about the mandatory "sorry to hear that" message here, we're talking about showing real, genuine empathy when members are having a difficult time. You can do this by expressing that you relate to how they feel—for example, explaining that you also would be frustrated or disappointed in his or her shoes.

Promise improvement

As a community moderator, you are a public advocate of your school community. If you surprise users and show that you do care (something that—let's face it—most regular users don't expect), then they will appreciate and remember this. This doesn't just stimulate the user to come back to the community in the future, but it also has a positive effect on his perception of your school in general.

Forward their feedback

Even if you think you're unlikely to be able to effect a change, let the school know about any negativity. More often than you might expect, they'll come back to you with something that your members will like to hear.

Accelerate thriving

It's not just about moderation! A thriving community relies on real-world interaction as well as technology. Any events that build face-to-face interaction create social networks for parents and help to build parental loyalty towards the school. Here are some top tips from our Ambassadors about how to make your real-world events a success:

Use Classlist's event management tools

Classlist has event management tools that have been developed to save time and make your life easier: a ready-made guestlist and a payment gateway to collect ticket money online.

Mobilise the Class Reps

Our most successful communities appoint at least 10 Class Reps across the school, either at class or year group level. Each Class Rep organises at least one social event per term.

Source ideas:

You can find inspiration on Classlist. For example, you can learn how to:

- Create a sell-out event [here](#).
- Attract more volunteers [here](#).
- Dream up more summer events [here](#).

Request help:

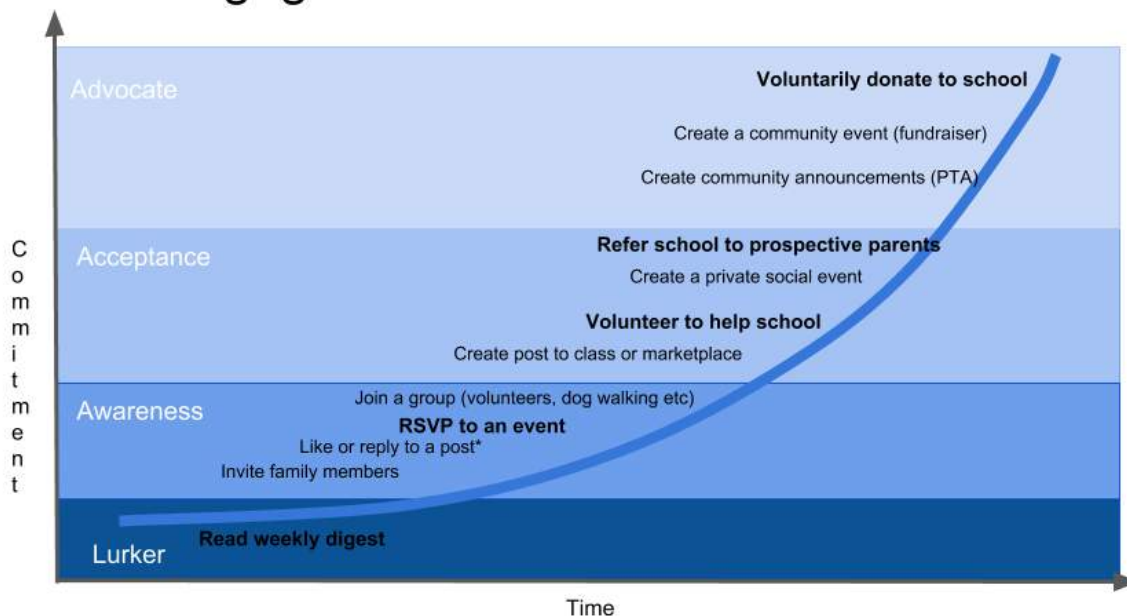
It's also worth posting in your community to ask parents to contribute ideas for events. If a parent suggests an event and offers to host it, say, 'Yes!' The more supportive you are of parents' offers to help, the more help they will be willing to offer. It's a virtuous circle.



Drive parent commitment:

The idea behind the Commitment Curve Framework: a recognised community management tool, is based on the idea that asking members to make increasing, incrementally-harder contributions, leads to more commitment. Any given request on the commitment curve is only slightly harder than the one before. Using Classlist’s platform and community manager resources, we find school communities will ramp large numbers of parents up the curve to ever-higher levels of commitment. It may start with liking a post but it can end with amazing fundraising efforts for your school.

Parent Engagement Commitment Curve



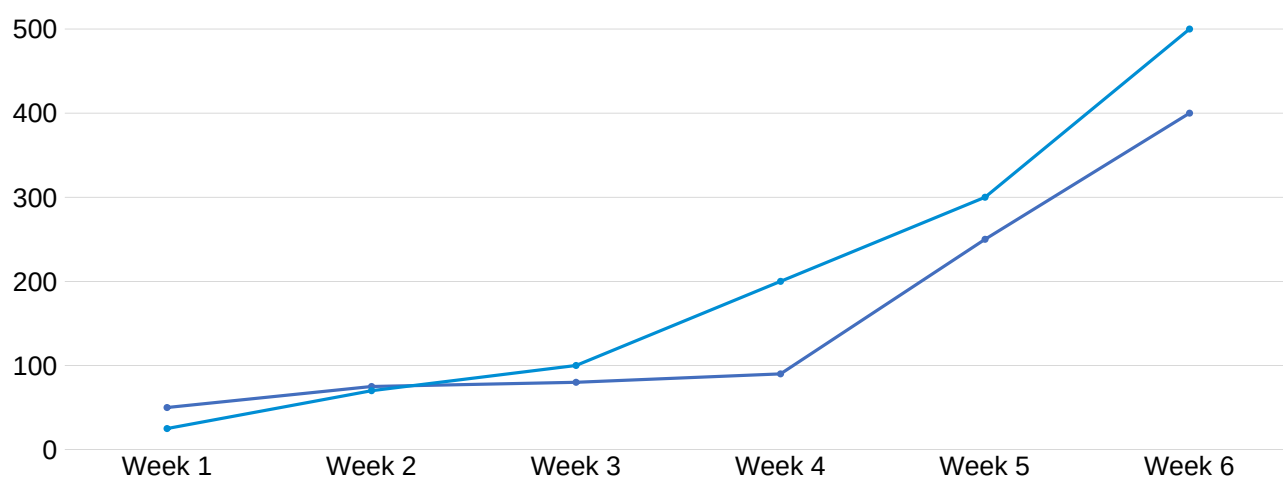
* Typical post asking for recommendations, asking for help with childcare, locating lost property or recommending a relevant local service

Measuring the pulse of your school community

How do you measure the pulse of your school community? The advantage of having an online platform to support your school community is that you can track its health over time. Here are some key school community health indicators we've gathered from our data:

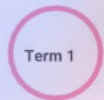
- Responses to requests for help > 4 responses per request within a day
- Parent who volunteer and participate regularly (i.e Class Reps) exceeds a ratio of 1 volunteer :10 parents
- Informal class level or school wide events occur at least once per term. At least three events are inclusive of both family and pupils.
- Open rates for announcements > 50%
- Fundraising exceeds >£45 per pupil per annum

Monitoring your community's performance helps inform action. If you would like more information about how your community is doing, contact us: support@classlist.com



Summary

Sustain

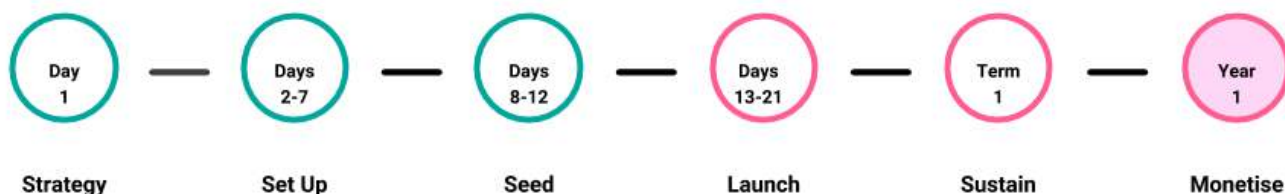


Term 1

Sustain

- Moderate and Promote Q&A,
- Demonstrate to parents how Classlist is a safe place for advice and childcare support.
- More announcements and events.
- Nudge further engagement

Step Six: Year One - Monetise



Classlist is entirely free for users – we cover our costs thanks to sponsorship from a small number of carefully selected, parent-focused businesses. This sponsorship can also raise money for your school. When you put us in touch with local sponsors who want to promote their services to parents, we share the revenue directly with you.

How does it work?

To ensure that all Classlist sponsors are relevant to your parents we want to hear about the businesses in your community that are looking to promote their services to a family audience. If parents at a school introduce a sponsor to us, we share the revenue directly with the school or with the parents' association.

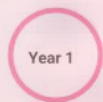
How does my school get involved?

It's a straightforward process: parents propose local businesses who may be interested in reaching other parents at your school. They submit these suggestions via an [online form](#), and we take it from there. Our team will get in touch with the potential sponsors to talk through the next steps, providing expert advice and ensuring they go live on your site as soon as possible. When we receive payment, we share the revenue with the school.

To find out more please contact our sponsorship team at support@classlist.com.

Summary

Monetise



Year 1

- Introduce Classlist to local businesses or parent business owners.
- Collect 25% of advertising revenue for school community.
- Seek donations from advocate parents

Monetise

Secret metrics

To sum up, here are the secret metrics that drive our successful, fundraising communities:

- A ratio of 1:10 community leader: parents. Whether these individuals are staff members, on the parent association or class reps, this ratio is the tipping point where great things happen: new parents become integrated into the community; the volunteer pool is broad and diverse; and fundraising events are well attended.
- Over 70% parents sign up to Classlist. This enables community leaders to access parents through the most efficient communications channel: their mobile. Plus, parents can communicate with each other, thereby reducing administrative burden on teachers and staff administrators.
- Over 75% of announcements opened. Classlist highlights the open rate for each announcement issued by community leaders. Ambassadors quickly learn which topics and headlines are most engaging.
- 100% of 21-day programme completed. The Ambassadors that follow our recommended steps enjoy successful thriving communities.
- One class event and two PTA events per term. Real life interaction is vital for building trust and goodwill. Most popular events involve the whole family.
- £800 raised on average each for our participating schools via Classlist advertiser sponsorship. To achieve this, community leaders invest, on average, two to three hours of their time.

Day 1:

Write community down community purpose/goals
 Stakeholder analysis
 Business case for school sponsor (3-5 bullets)
 Draft welcome post (see examples)

Days 2-7:

Set up School Profile
 Add classes and year groups
 Invite 5 advocates (see suggested text for personal invitation)
 Add Ambassador role to LinkedIn
 Invite class reps for each class before you invite the remainder of parents
 Add upcoming events from school calendar

Days 8-12:

Day 8 - Share Draft letter with Head Teacher/Principal or Senior Staff Member (include Appstore and GooglePlay Store links)
 Day 8 - Invite parents - using school invitation uploader in order to pre-approve parents or invite on platform using WhatsApp
 Day 9 - Welcome new parents
 Day 10 - Downloadable flyers and postcards (<https://help.classlist.com/hc/en-us/articles/115000820111-Printable-All-About-Classlist-Info-Pack>)
 Day 11 - Resend invitations via school office
 Day 11 - Classlist will send out reminders to parent emails uploaded
 Day 12 - Arrange an event to encourage parents to join.

Days 13 -18:

Set up community groups (i.e volunteers, dog lovers, running clubs)
 Set up broader school community event(s)
 Ask questions in feed (illustrate benefits - lost homework, local recommendation)
 Ask Head Teacher/Principal to send out email to parents asking them to join. Use draft letter above
 Subscribe to Ambassador and Class Rep Newsletter

Days 19 - 21:

Final straggler email "everyone else has joined message"
 Another social event to help parent meetup - especially new parents

Term 1

Send announcements
 Monitor
 Promote Q&A

Year 1

Introduce Classlist to local businesses or parent business owners
 Collect 25% of referral revenue