



Room Parent **SURVIVAL GUIDE**

West Lafayette Elementary School

2019-2020

September 11, 2019

Dear Room Parent,

I hope that the start of the school year is going smoothly! Thank you for volunteering to serve as a room parent this year! The Parent Council has prepared a “room parent survival guide” to help support the invaluable efforts of room parent throughout the year. We hope that this helps you. Once you’ve completed a “term” as room parent, we would love to have your thoughts and suggestions on how to improve this manual.

As always, we welcome your input and feedback. Please let us know how things are going!

Sincerely,

Alayna DeWees
2018-2019 Room Parent Chairperson
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2019 – 2020

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Again, THANK YOU! Without the dedication and effort of parents like you, many of the events that make WLES a wonderful environment for our children would not be possible. This brief guide is intended to give you a quick orientation regarding what to expect, and the wisdom of other room parent who have served before you!

Being a room parent is a great way to become involved with your child's classroom, teacher and school. It isn't intended to be a burden, and you don't have to shoulder all of the responsibilities yourself. In this document, we are going to summarize the ways that room parents are involved in making WLES events a success each year. While these are regular activities that occur each year, you are free to work with your teacher to develop alternative ideas.

The most important part of being a room parent is establishing good communication with your teacher and the other parents in the room. In recent years, room parents have relied extensively on the use of email correspondence to communicate with their classroom parents. The essential tips for being a room parent...

1. Communicate with your teacher! Meet with the teacher to establish expectation and your limitations. Teachers vary in their expectations / use of parent volunteers, and it is important to have a good understanding right from the beginning.
2. Introduce yourself to the parents. It is important to let parents know who you are and what you will be asking throughout the year. The best way to reach out to parents initially is via a letter sent home with the students or via email (the teacher may have a preference). A sample letter is included in the next section.
3. Involve other parents. Some parents are unable to volunteer their time but would be happy to send in items – if you offer a range of ways to participate that is always helpful. *It isn't your responsibility as room parent to cover every single event, but rather to communicate volunteer opportunities to the parents in your classroom.* It is ideal to try to find a way for whoever wants to help to be able to participate, in some capacity.

COMMUNICATION

One of the most important responsibilities and functions of a room parent is to help with communication regarding school and classroom events with other parents in the classroom. There are numerous events throughout the year that may require you to help your child's teacher find volunteers – one of the easiest ways to coordinate this is to use a site called signup.com (used to be known as volunteerspot.com). Having parent emails will be invaluable to you throughout the year as you facilitate communication and volunteer opportunities in your child's classroom. We do not have a directory this year, but most teachers have gotten permission from parents to share their email with you for Room Parent Communication purposes. If you have new children added to your classroom throughout the year or your teacher has not done this, you can use the form below to gain access to their email. Make sure you also introduce yourself to new families over the course of the year so that they are included in all of the classroom happenings.

Most teachers have already received permission from their parents to share their email address for room parent/volunteer purposes and will be able to supply you with a n email list right away. Check with your teacher first. If they haven't, you can ask them to email the parents for permission OR send this letter home with their students for their parents to fill out:

Hello! My name is xxx (xxx's mom) and I am the Room Parent for xxx. As the Room Parent I will be helping coordinate parties, volunteer opportunities in the classroom and school and various class gifts. I look forward to getting to know and working with you this year.

The main way for us to communicate is via email.

Would you be willing to share a preferred email I can contact you at for class purposes only?

If so, please return this sheet to xxxx no later than xxxx.

Thank you in advance for helping to make this an incredible year!

Students Name: _____

Parents Name: _____

Preferred email: _____

Thank You,

xxxx

Contact email

PARENT COUNCIL SPONSORED EVENTS with VOLUNTEERS

From time to time there will be Parent Council sponsored events that require the help of volunteers to run smoothly. (for example – Scholastic Book Fair, Fall Carnival, Staff Appreciation Lunches, etc.) You may be asked to communicate with parents in your classroom to let them know of the need for volunteers.

TEACHER RECOGNITION / GIFTS

While this is not a required aspect of being a room parent, room parents often help coordinate group gifts for a teacher during the holidays, end of the year or for other special occasions during the teacher's life. If you are interested in doing this, there are many cute surveys on [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) that you can have your teacher fill out at the beginning of the year stating all of their favorites. Many parents appreciate the opportunity to donate to a group gift. It is always appropriate to stress that giving is completely optional, and that any amount would be appreciated. It is also nice to let people know where the money is going. For example,

"To the Parents of Children in Mrs. X's Class:

Hi, I am (Name), room parent for this class. I would like to purchase a gift card for Mrs. X as an end of the year gift. I know that she likes to eat lunch at (restaurant name), and thought that we could use the funds to get a gift card there. Your participation is entirely voluntary! If you would like to send in a donation toward that gift card, please do so in a sealed envelope, with my name and my child's name on it. Alternatively, you can drop it to me at my house, at (address). If you have other suggestions or concern, please contact me at (info). If you want to participate, please send in your donation to me no later than (date), so I can make arrangements for this gift.

Thank you!

CLASS PARTIES

Room parents are usually involved in the planning and execution of classroom parties, although your involvement will vary by teacher preference. Your classroom teacher will let you know the themes and dates of planned parties, and what they expect from you. Typically, most classes have a Fall Party, Winter or Holiday Party, Valentine's Day or Friendship Party and End of the Year Party. There may be other, at the discretion of the teacher or some teachers choose to forego certain parties. Also, individual teachers will decide the time and date of the party and how long they want to devote to the party. They will also let you know if they would like you to plan and run the entire thing, or just send in snacks, etc... As the room parent, you are not required to attend every single class party. However, if the teacher requests this, you do need to arrange for parent to be in the room during the party. Discuss with your teacher how many adults will be appropriate for each event. We've included some tips on planning a classroom party but your fresh ideas and input are always welcomed and appreciated!

*** Please note: All room parents AND party attendees MUST have a completed background check.**

IDEAS FOR PLANNING A CLASSROOM PARTY

Core aspect of any elementary school party:

1. Snack. WLES is a Nut and Peanut Controlled environment (nuts ARE allowed in the cafeteria!!!). This means that in the classrooms they are nut free. Please check ALL labels to make sure that all items do not contain nuts or are processed in a factory that uses nuts. This also means no home-baked goods. All food items should enter the classroom in their original sealed packaging.

Please note that WLES observes a wellness policy that does specify the sorts of snacks that are appropriate. The general rule of thumb is that you should be offering healthy options in an equal balance to things that are less healthy. So, for example, if you are offering cupcakes, offer some fruit as well. Consider doing snacks that are fun for children, as well as healthy. For example, you can have the children make their own yogurt parfaits. Each child can choose his / her toppings, such as different types of fruit, granola, teddy grahams, etc. Drinks need to be healthier choices as well. The kids are often happy with milk or water; please consider those in addition to other drinks.

***Also keep in mind any classroom food allergies.** You may contact your child teacher to ask if there are any classroom allergies other than peanuts and or nuts. The teacher will not reveal the name of the any student(s) but will disclose the allergies.

2. Games / Crafts / Activities. You may want to plan a variety of games, crafts and / or activities to entertain the kids during the party. For younger grades, having 4 – 5 “stations” of activities that they can rotate through during the party is often a good choice. Older grades can usually participate as teams or a whole group but also enjoy a variety of activities. Remember to confer with your teacher. It is important to keep safety, the amount of space, everyone’s varying abilities and interests in mind when planning.
3. Optional Extras. Decorations, goody bags (again, please think about the wellness policy when doing this), music, etc. These are absolutely NOT necessary, but depending on the teacher, party and level of parent participation and enthusiasm, can be fun to incorporate.

Parent volunteers can help you plan and lead the games and crafts, and can provide the necessary ingredients for a successful party:

1. Healthy snack
2. Sweet treat
3. Drinks (Juice boxes, water bottles, hot chocolate, apple cider)
4. Paper Goods (themed plates, napkins, cups, silverware)
5. Plan & run game(s)
6. Plan & run activity
7. Plan & run craft(s)
8. Goody Bags
9. Take pictures for the teacher

Even if you plan the games, crafts & activities yourself or the teacher has them planned for you, you should have at least 3 – 4 other parents contributing and helping at the party. Ask for help, get others to contribute, donate and support the class. One of the best and easiest ways to do that will be to use signup.com (formerly known as volunteerspot.com).

Activity and Game Suggestions for Theme Parties:

The best advice here is to plan ahead, be prepared & try the game/craft/activity first!!! There is nothing worse than standing in front of a group of kids (and parents) who are excited to get going (and may have a limited amount of time) and not being prepared, having it not work the way you think it is going to or finding out that pieces are missing.

General activities that can be modified for most party themes: Hangman, charades, 20 questions, who am I, musical chairs, variations of pin the tail on the donkey, bozo buckets - Consider space & time limitations and make it fun. Children will want to do things that are different than what they do during their regular school day.

Fall Party: Candy corn toss – try to get the candy corn into the pumpkin pail (easier and neater version is to use small “ghosts” made of tissue wrapped around foam balls), pumpkin bowling – either use a small pie pumpkin or fake pumpkin to knock down paper towel rolls. Again, there are countless ideas online

Winter / Holiday Party: Try to avoid religious themes and stick to the winter aspect – snowmen, snowflakes, penguins, polar bears, deer, etc. Snowman Marshmallow Construction Snack – Use large marshmallows, toothpicks, raisins, pretzel sticks, etc. to make their own snowmen. Gingerbread houses, snowball toss and Popsicle stick snowflakes are all fun.

Friendship Party: Some ideas include decorating your own heart shaped sugar cookies, making animals out of different size hearts, using craft supplies to make a special valentine for someone.

End of the Year Party: Many times the teacher or grade level will plan this party, so be sure to check with the teacher first. The weather should be nicer by the time this party happens, so consider walking to a nearby park or moving the party outside. This allows for more active games, such as Simon Says, Red Light Green Light, Relay Races, etc.

Other Party Tips: Minute to Win It type games are a lot of fun. It is also nice to tie in a community service aspect into the party. For instance, make cards for Veterans or residents of a local nursing home during the winter or Valentine’s party.

Helpful Websites for Ideas:

<https://www.pinterest.com/>

<https://family.disney.com/>

<http://www.birthdaypartyideas.com/>

<http://birthdaypartyideas4kids.com/>

<http://www.coolest-party-ideas.com/>

<http://school-party-ideas.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.party-games-etc.com/school/>

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/>

