

**H . R . P .**

# **The Basics What You Need to Know**



Available through the  
Room Parent Committee  
2005

September 26, 2005

Hello Home Room Parent,

We would like to thank you for volunteering to be a Head Room Parent for your child's classroom. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to make this school year extra special for your child and their classmates.

This resource guide is designed as a guide to help you through the year. Enclosed you will find a job description, sample letters, party basics, tips, suggestions, financial information, and answers to commonly asked questions.

Also, the Room Parent Committee will be hosting a Room Parent Expo on Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, at Robert Crown from 7:00-8:30PM. Please join us to meet the committee and to get some interesting ideas for your Classroom Parties.

Thank you for your willingness to partner with your child's teacher and the Room Parent Committee this year. Let us know if we can assist you in any way.

Thanks,

Angela Truesdale, RPC Chair - Robert Crown  
Sherri Sorensen, RPC Chair - Cotton Creek  
Lisa Ohms, RPC Chair - Wauconda Grade School

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## **BASICS**

### **What is a "Head Room Parent"?**

- A Head Room Parent is someone who volunteers to assist the teacher. The extent of parental involvement varies from teacher to teacher, so you may be very involved or you may find yourself with very little work to do.
- The primary purpose of a Head Room Parent is to host the classroom parties.
- On occasion, two or more Head Room Parents may volunteer. It is a wonderful way to share the responsibility. Our goal is to encourage as many parents to volunteer as possible.
- S/he typically collects money, recruits volunteers for specific events, and assigns the commitments for the coming school year.
- S/he sends out letters to parents during the first month of school after conferring with the teacher. The first letter should be a "Recruiting" tool, and the second letter should be a "Thanks for Committing To..." tool. This is quite possibly the most time consuming task for a Head Room Parent, but well worth the effort.
- It is also your responsibility to remind parents throughout the year what they have signed up for and to THANK them for their help as well.

### **How Can I Be Most Effective?**

- The key to being an effective Head Room Parent is communication, as Head Room Parent, you will serve as a vital communication link between your child's teacher, the parents and the students whom you coordinate the classroom parties with.
- Respect the teacher's wishes. Don't expect all teachers to be alike in their needs.
- Organization is the key when planning parties. By being as organized as possible at the beginning of the school year, you will find that other parents will sign up to help more, and follow through with the commitments they make to help.

- Send out recruiting and commitment letters as soon as possible. Seeing a commitment on paper is helpful. (An example is in this packet)
- For each party, you may want to fill out a "Room Party Checklist", and send a copy to each volunteer on the list two weeks prior to the party. Then you can follow up with a phone call a few days before the party. Never assume that everyone will just show up as planned!
- Organize for yourself, a binder or folder to gather the class list, parent list, notes from the teacher, filled-out "recruiting" forms, Room Party Checklists, and any other correspondence.
- **FIND OUT IF THERE ARE ANY FOOD ALLERGIES IN THE CLASSROOM. WE CANNOT STRESS THIS ENOUGH. IF THERE IS A SERIOUS FOOD ALLERGY, PLEASE NOTIFY ALL PARENTS PRIOR TO PARTIES.**
- Your job is not to do all the work, but to lead and delegate.

### **Head Room Parents Have Rights, Too...**

Though you are there to serve in your child's classroom and assist the teacher in many ways, remember that you have rights, too.

You have the right:

- Not to be taken advantage of...
- To be able to say 'No' and have it stick...
- To visit your other child's room - even on 'party day'. (Just let others know what's up...)
- Not to fund classroom activities from your own pocket...
- To ask others to step up and help...

### **Who Pays for What?**

- The Head Room Parent sends a letter home at the beginning of the year, asking each student to contribute to a "classroom party fund". The amount of the contribution is \$5.00 per student. In addition, it is appropriate to ask some parents to supplement the parties with snacks or favors to help stretch the budget. Also, be sensitive to the possibility that there may be special financial

needs for some children in the classroom. The PTO has a limited supply of supplemental funds; if you feel you need supplemental funds, please contact Angela Truesdale at 847-526-7207 for RC, Sherri Sorensen at 847-487-5228 for CC or Lisa Ohms at 847-526-2721 for WGS. No child should ever be made to feel embarrassed.

- With that \$5/student, you will supply crafts, games, and decorations for three classroom parties during the year.
- In the Spring, an additional donation may be requested for Teacher Appreciation.

## **PARTY PLANNING**

### **What Does a Room Party Involve?**

- The goal of classroom parties is for every child to have fun when they participate.
- Classroom parties take place during the school day. They are usually one hour in length, and can involve games, crafts, snacks, and favors. Each class has its own party, and all the activities should be age appropriate. The parents are the "hosts" of the party, although the teacher will always attend the party.
- The "standard" parties are:
  - Halloween
  - Winter Holiday
  - Valentine's Day
  - Teacher Appreciation
- We also are responsible for snacks during Test Week.
- Every teacher has different expectations. Some teachers will give you a party plan; others will await the party as anxiously as the children to see what fun you have prepared for them!

### **Room Party Basics**

- Fill out a Room Party Checklist for each party.

- Plan to arrive 10 - 15 minutes before the party is to begin (RC parents will not be allowed in the building prior to 2:15p). Unload all of your props and goodies as close to the classroom as possible without disrupting the class. Some teachers will allow you to bring "the stuff" in the morning before school starts.
- When planning a party, please remember that the party is for the students. In respect to Halloween, many students, particularly the younger ones, have a difficult time with the really scary things. What we as an adult deem cute may be perceived as scary and frightening to the student.
- Regarding the Winter Holiday Party, it is not considered appropriate to have the party based only on Christmas ideas. Please consider either to focus on a variety of multicultural celebrations (La Posada, Hanukkah, Kawanzaa, Christmas, etc.) or on a winter theme (sledding, mittens, igloos, snowflakes/men, etc.).
- Start and end the party on time.
- Don't assume that pre-school siblings will be welcomed. Check with the teacher first.
- Be sure that your party plans can be adapted to accommodate any special need students in the classroom.
- Bring everything you will need for each game and craft. Don't assume that the teacher will have masking tape or a glue gun if you need those items.
- Bring along a large plastic trash bag (or ask the custodians ahead of time) and some paper towels. The teacher will appreciate not having an overflowing trashcan, and the school custodian will adore you!
- When planning parties for children, you may want divide your activities into "stations". Recruit 1 or 2 parents/helpers to work at each station, and divide the children evenly into small groups. Have the students spend no more than 10-15 minutes at a station,

then have everyone rotate at a defined "signal" (turn the lights off, blow a whistle, or ring a bell).

- K-1<sup>st</sup> Grades: Select 2-3 games, a craft, and then read an age appropriate book to the group while the snack is being prepared and served.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> Grades: Select 2-3 games, and a craft. It has been suggested that if you have 3rd or 4th graders you might want to ask them if they want to do a craft. They may want to do games only.
- Sometimes teachers will have seasonal decorations already up. Simple table decorations can really dress up a room. Balloons, streamers, hanging from the doors, curling ribbon, and plastic tablecloths are inexpensive, but go a long way in making a room look festive.
- Pictures, pictures and more pictures...Don't forget the camera (and film!) or video camera. It is best to take group pictures at the beginning of the party. If you have a special something happening in the classroom, share it with the school office. They may want to take some pictures too! Save those pictures and pass on your doubles to the teacher. You may see them in the yearbook at the end of the year.
- Above all else, be flexible, and have fun!

### **Room Party Craft Tips**

- Make sure that the craft you choose is age-appropriate, and appealing to both genders. Your craft can do double duty, as a perfect party activity, a terrific take-home party favor or it can be the SNACK!
- Allow approximately 10 minutes for a craft to be completed. If the craft will take longer than the allotted amount of time, prepare several of the steps prior to the party. This can include cutting, painting, or assembling all the needed materials in a separate baggie for each child. This may seem like a lot of advance preparation, but it WORKS.

- If the craft will need time to dry, label a paper plate with each child's name, and place the item on the plate. If the craft did not dry, send it home in a baggie that you supplied.
- Always cover the work surface with newspaper, or tablecloths. Disposable plastic tablecloths and/or drop cloths work perfectly because you can use a color to match your theme, and then just roll them up when the party is over. Clean up should always be this cheap and easy!
- Only adults should use hot glue guns. (Tacky glue can be used as a substitute, but will take longer to dry.) Glue sticks dry fast, too.
- An option rather than glue: Double sided tape.
- Set the craft up as a "station", and rotate the children.
- Remember that every finished product is perfect just the way it turned out. It may not come close to resembling the perfect sample you prepared, but each child should be made to feel proud of his/her accomplishment.

### **Room Party Game Tips**

- Keep the games short, simple and age-appropriate. Games should last no longer than 10 minutes each.
- Keep the directions simple...the children will be wound up and ready to party. For most, listening is something they are only required to do while class is in session!
- When playing elimination type games (Hot Potato), make sure you have something for the eliminated children to do. An Activity packet consisting of puzzles would be ideal.
- If you choose to have prizes, do not hand them out as the games go along. It's a distraction and one more thing for the children to keep track of. You might consider putting the 'prizes' into their take-home bags in one centralized place as the party goes along.

By the time the party ends, all the children should have identical prizes and favors in their treat bags. Everyone is a winner!

- Always plan an extra game just in case you finish faster than anticipated. It can be a very easy game like heads-down thumbs-up. Other games work perfectly with some groups, while they are complete flops with others.

### **Room Party Beverage Tips**

- Robert Crown Parents- water is the only beverage allowed.
- Freeze club soda in ice cube trays and them to drinks-they love the instant fizz!
- Use 3"-4"die-cut shapes to match the holiday. Punch two holes into the shape (vertically), and slide it on to the straw. Use craft foam in place of paper to make this a take home favor.
- Add little umbrellas, fruit skewers or licorice "straws" mean big fun for kids.
- For children in grades K-2, fill cups only half full. They can always have more, and you will reduce the number of big spills.
- In order to avoid spillage from using cups and a punch bowl, serve juice boxes or squeeze bottles instead. Highly recommended especially for K-2 Grades

### **Room Party Snack Tips**

- Check with the teacher (again - better safe than sorry) prior to the party to find out if any of the children have food allergies.
- Serve 2 main snacks at each party (both on the healthier side). Please remember this is only a guide. Sweet creative snacks are always a big win with students.
- Often you will receive more sweets than requested. Supply baggies so that they may be taken home with the students.

- Always plan to have extra snacks available so that the teacher, school principal, and parent helpers can enjoy them also.

## **FINANCES**

- Please organize and keep receipts of your expenditures. You may want to simply total the expenses for each event, store them in an envelope, and write the total on the outside.
- We need to promote accountability for the funds we receive and use for the students.

## **TEACHER QUESTIONS/CONVERSATIONS/EXPECTATIONS**

- Can you provide a classroom list so all children can be acknowledged? (Important for planning party favors, food & craft planning, and # of helpers to recruit.)
- Do you have a listing of the parents along with phone numbers/email addresses?
- Do any of the children have food allergies or other special needs?
- Do you prefer to be contacted with questions...by e-mail, phone, note, in person?
- Do you have preferences for the party in terms of structure? For example, some teachers prefer a game, a craft, a snack and a book, while others give free reign.
- Do you prefer feeding the children at the beginning of the party, or the end?
- What are your thoughts on having pre-school siblings attend the parties?
- Is it okay to set up the room before the parties begin?
- Can we rearrange tables and chairs for the parties?

- Are there any school policies we should be aware of in our planning?
- Are there any photo release issues with any students in the class?
- Do you want to proofread notes before they go home to parents?

#### **TEACHER APPRECIATION**

- Teacher Appreciation Week is May 1-5. However, far away that may seem, it is worth mentioning now.
  - Get to know your teachers best you can
  - Gather ideas for May throughout the year
  - PTO will take care of Special Teachers
  - RPC will provide you with results of Teacher Survey for additional gift ideas.
  - Keep things simple
  - Remember, this is about the teachers not the kids
  - There does not have to be a gift for everyday, use your imaginations
  - If additional funds are needed check the example letter at the back of this book.

#### **SHOW THEM WHAT YOU KNOW**

- Testing Week is March 13-17 (2nd grade through 6th grade) and 20-24 (2nd grade only).
- Talk to the teacher regarding times for drop off
  - Parents are not allowed in the buildings during testing times.
- Healthy snacks may be preferred

## ROOM PARTY CHECKLIST

Party Occasion: \_\_\_\_\_

Party Helpers: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Parents volunteering to help with the games, craft, book reading, and set up/clean up need to attend the party, and have all necessary items for their assignment.)

Budget: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Parents will contribute: \_\_\_\_\_

(Parents contributing paper goods, snacks, decorations and favors can send the "contribution" in to the Head Room Parent prior to the party if they are unable to attend.)

Teacher Preferences/Recommendations: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Volunteer Assignments: \_\_\_\_\_

Game #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Game #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Game #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Craft: \_\_\_\_\_

Decorations: \_\_\_\_\_

Timekeeper: \_\_\_\_\_

Book: \_\_\_\_\_

Snack #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Snack #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Treat-bag stuffer: \_\_\_\_\_

Paper Goods (plates, napkins & cutlery): \_\_\_\_\_

Beverage/cups: \_\_\_\_\_

Favors (treat "bag", goodies, items to match the theme): \_\_\_\_\_

Set Up/Clean Up: \_\_\_\_\_

Contingency Plans: \_\_\_\_\_