

Room Parent Guide

Role of Room Parents

Room parents serve in two main capacities: as communicators, and to provide assistance within the class.

On the one hand, the Room Parent is the communication link between the class teacher, parents of the class, the Parent Council, and on occasion, the school.

The other responsibility of the Room Parent is to assist the teacher by helping to coordinate class related activities, and securing parental participation in the following:

- Field trips
- Plays and performances
- Parent evenings
- School events and festivals
- Special classroom activities

Top Five Reasons to become a Room Parent

1. Meet and develop relationships with other parents.
2. Model for your child your commitment to his/her education.
3. Help the class teacher to carry certain tasks, thereby freeing the teacher to focus on teaching and nurturing the students.
4. Continue learning about Waldorf Education.
5. Contribute to the well-being and stability of the entire school.

Room Parent Selection

Room Parents are selected by their class teacher. Anyone interested in being a Room Parent should let the class teacher know. Some classes

work effectively with a small 'team' of Room Parents who can share duties.

What Do I Have To Do?

- Help the class teacher organize class events and school outings.
- Help generate interest for parents to participate in class events, performances, plays, field trips, school events, and festivals.
- Assist the class teacher with preparation for parent evenings.
- Attend Parent Council meetings, generally held monthly – and relay any information back to the parents of your child's class.

What Skills are Desirable?

- *Ability to organize and delegate:* Room Parents need to be able to stay informed of upcoming events and execute timely and effective organization of parent evenings, trips, and other class/school events.
- *Ability to communicate:* the essence of the Room Parent commitment is communication. They need to have the ability to communicate clearly and promptly to and from the parents and the teacher. Room Parents also need to be good listeners, so other parents feel heard and their ideas and contributions valued. It is important to be friendly and relate well to all other parents so they feel comfortable in approaching you. Parents working well together create a healthy social atmosphere, supporting the children and contributing to the school community.
- Room Parents play a role in welcoming new students and their families into the class, especially at parent evenings. The

new parents will be grateful for being included, especially when they are entering a class where the group has been together for a number of years.

How Much Time Does It Take?

The time commitment varies according to the level of class activities. You will be busier during preparation for a class play, and when your child's class is engaged in organizing field trips. There will be quiet times as well. Sharing the Room Parent responsibility with another parent is a great way to make this commitment more fun and less time-consuming for each of you. In addition you are asked to attend monthly Parent Council meetings, to gather and share information to and from your class. Parent Council meetings take place on the Third Wednesday of the month. Room Parents are expected to attend the monthly Parent Council meetings. A calendar of Parent Council Meetings is published on the school's web calendar, and at the Parent Council bulletin board.

Terms

The Room Parent ideally volunteers his/her time from August of one year to August of the next, and in some cases may serve for more than one school year. Room parents help the teacher to find and train a replacement at the end of their term.

What Are My Responsibilities Around Parent Meetings and Adult Education?

As parent meetings are scheduled by the teachers, you need to communicate the meeting times to all parents in your class. The teachers publish a schedule of monthly parent meetings & adult education workshops, which are usually

Wednesdays at 3pm. There may be additional parent meetings on special topics, for example a Grade Five parent meeting about the Pentathlon field trip. It is important that every family receive the message and be strongly encouraged to participate. Although parent evenings are not mandatory, they form the core of the social fabric of the class, supporting a shared understanding among parents of the pedagogical direction for the year, and of the nature of the students' interactions with their teachers, and with their peers. Attendance at parent meetings and adult education workshops is a cornerstone of the students' success and sense of support in a Waldorf school.

Refreshments are not required but are a pleasant addition to parent meetings, so you may want to organize this by arranging contributions on a rotating basis.

You will also need to arrange for minutes to be taken during the parent meetings. . These minutes cover the topics discussed, key aspects of all points of view, any conclusions or decisions reached, any action to be taken and by whom, and within which time frame. By taking minutes, you are able to share 'what happened at the meeting' with parents who could not attend.

Childcare at Meetings

Your class teacher will let you know if there is childcare provided during a meeting. Childcare on campus must be supervised by a school employee.

Room parents are welcome to help parents support each other by communicating among parents any information of spouses & teenagers & grandparents in the community who are available to babysit at the park or their home during meeting.

How Much Do I Need to Know About Waldorf Education?

You do not need to be particularly familiar with Waldorf Education to be a great Room Parent. What you do need is a willingness to learn from your child's teacher the particular ways in which Waldorf Education approaches students and their learning, as you will be working closely with your class teacher. You should thoroughly familiarize yourself with the Parent Handbook (available at the school's website or from the school office in electronic or hardcopy), and keep informed about the school's events through the school's newsletter and website. This will provide you with the knowledge base to support you in your role.

How Much Do I Need To Know About the Organization of the School and How Do I Handle Concerns?

You are not expected to answer any questions that parents have about Waldorf Education or about the school. You are the listening ear that your fellow parents trust, and you are requested to guide them in bringing their concerns and questions to the class teacher, the Co-Administrators, or the Executive Director. In fact, we ask that you refrain from answering to any issue brought to you by your fellow parents, so as not to burden yourself with responsibilities beyond the scope of your task. The teachers, Administrators, and/or Executive Director will handle all questions and issues in a timely and knowledgeable manner, and they will direct all questions promptly to the best resource.

Email Communication

Communication via email is the most effective and preferred method of communication for most parents. When, in your role as room Parent, you send an email message to the parents in your

class, we kindly request that you follow confidentiality in the following way:

- a. Do not use student names in the email.
- b. Send messages as a 'bcc' unless all parents have given you permission to share their email address.

If there are parents in the class who do not use email (whether they have no email address, or have an email address but do not use it), it is the responsibility of the Room Parent to telephone these families to relay the information OR to run copies of the email and hand out to parents without email OR speak in person to those families. Also, please be mindful of any families whose speak primarily another language (example, Spanish) and communicate with them in their language. When this situation arises, contact the office for translation support.

General Suggestions

Maintain regular contact with your class teacher to find out how parents can best assist with class activities.

Most classes find they like to organize at least one social event each year – in addition to the school-wide socials organized by Parent Council. Check with your parents and teacher to see what they would most like to do – a mid-year picnic, a holiday potluck, or an end-of-year gathering.

It is helpful to future Room Parents if you keep a brief written record of what was done during the year – gifts, parties, issues, activities and suggestions.

Class Gift

If your class is considering giving a gift to a faculty or staff member, you may be called upon to help organize the effort. By keeping gifts modest, we can communicate our appreciation without creating uncomfortable situations.

Please ensure that any collection of money for gifts is kept anonymous and entirely voluntary. Remember the joy of a gift is in its thoughtfulness.

Understand who our fellow parents are. Some parents truly have very little time to contribute. Their limitations in that area should be respected. Specific requests work much better than open ended ones.

It works well to be direct about the need for all parents to contribute to the social life of the class as well as the pedagogical life of the students. Parents are very keen supporters of Waldorf Education, for which they often make substantial sacrifices. The support of parents should be regularly acknowledged and appreciated within your class. Talk with your group about ways to share responsibilities.