

THANK YOU for volunteering as a Room Mom (or Dad!) All of our parent volunteers contribute to the successful environment at Northwood Elementary. The following are some guidelines that are important for you to know. Many of the samples have blank spaces for you to fill out for your class (ie: teacher's name, grade, etc.) If you would like for me to email you the any of the samples, just email me your request.

This year I will again send newsletters to all Room Parents via e-mail. It saves paper as well as immeasurable time in the printing and distribution of the newsletter. This also alleviates any problems with children misplacing the materials. I ask for your support by making sure I always have your most current information.

Please feel free to contact me any time to discuss any questions you may have. My job is to assist you in any way should you need anything as a room parent – I look forward to working with each of you!

Have a great year!

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NORTHWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ROOM PARENT GUIDE

2006-2007

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2006-2007 Room Parent Guide

Thank you for volunteering to be a Room Parent for your child's classroom this year. Being a Room Parent is a great opportunity to show your support for your child, his/her teacher(s), and the Northwood Elementary family.

As a head, assistant, or co-Room Parent, it is your job to:

- act as a coordinator for class parties in December and May
- put together birthday bags to celebrate each child's special day
- provide a treat from the class for the teacher on her birthday
- act as a liaison to the PTA for your class for PTA activities such as BINGO prize bags and volunteer signups for field days, BINGO and Movie Nights, etc.
- help coordinate Teacher Appreciation Day activities for your class
- coordinate healthy snack donations during standardized testing, if requested by the teacher
- to involve as many additional interested parents in classroom activities as possible and help publicize and support school activities
- to support the reasonable needs/requests of your teacher, and
- ENJOY this opportunity to be involved!

It is also your responsibility to:

- be a member of the PTA
- properly record your volunteer time through our VIPS program
- sign in and out properly and support all school safety and security procedures, and
- *be fiscally and socially responsible in making monetary requests, keep and submit your receipts to the PTA treasurer and accurately maintain Room Parent finances.*

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

I feel very strongly that it is part of the Room Parent's "job" to try to include as many parents in activities and events as possible. I have given everyone who is a Room Parent a list of everyone else who volunteered for the job. Please include them. This job can be overwhelming, especially in the younger grades. Sending updates, making phone lists, calls and e-mails, and even asking for interpreters where necessary can ensure that each child has the opportunity for their parent to contribute. E-mails are a vital way to notify parents of a classroom need or upcoming event. I strongly encourage you to obtain e-mail addresses from as many parents as possible. Many parents wish to contribute in some way. Not

everyone can or will, but we should all be given the chance. One way is to put out sign-up sheets again at Curriculum Night. Please remember to delegate!

COMMUNICATION

It is always important to set up good lines of communication with your teacher(s). For Kindergarten parents especially, it is helpful to ask for a short meeting with your teacher to discuss her hopes and needs for the school year.

I will be sending out newsletters and checking in with you when warranted to keep our activities running smoothly. Keep in mind that your teacher knows best when it comes to what is acceptable for the makeup of children in her classroom, and defer to her judgment. It is also important for the activities on each grade level to be equitable. By adhering to the policies and standards set forth by the administration, ALL children at Northwood should experience wonderful activities in their classroom.

CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY RECOGNITION

Children's individual birthdays are not celebrated with a party or cake in classrooms. However, Room Parents do provide the teachers with a small birthday token to be given to the children on their special day. The teachers then will make this a special day for that child within their classroom.

1. It is suggested that the birthday bags cost around \$1 each and include a small birthday treat such as a lollipop, candy bar, snack size M&Ms and a small prize such as a pencil, bookmark or stickers. Remember if you use food items, they should be items that will stay fresh until the children receive them. It is simplest to make these all alike.
2. Consult your teacher about how she wants them delivered. **Many people make them all at once and deliver them to the teacher.** Obtain a birthday list if you will make these monthly. Make a few extra in case new children move into the class later in the year. This should be done as soon as possible as we have lots of August birthdays.
3. Again, the teachers are responsible for handing these out to the children. No cakes, cupcakes, cookies, etc. or individual celebrations are allowed at Northwood.

TEACHER BIRTHDAY RECOGNITION

Traditionally we also recognize our wonderful teachers on their birthdays (or half-birthdays for summer birthdays). Teacher birthdays are listed on the Room Parent phone/e-mail list. It is appropriate to buy or make a gift from the class for this event and a wonderful treat is to provide a special meal during your teacher's lunch break. You can make her your specialty or offer to bring her a meal from her favorite restaurant. If you're unable to do this, other ideas include coffee and homemade muffins, a card signed by all the children, etc. Please try

to keep this simple so that teacher birthday celebrations are equitable. Another great tool to find out what your teacher enjoys is a binder found near teacher mailboxes. In it, each teacher has filled out a survey listing their favorite things. It is a great way to find out what candy she likes or what restaurants she enjoys.

PARTIES

There are two class parties permitted during the school year. There is one in December held the last week of the semester and another during the last week of school in May. We encourage classes on the same grade-level to join together for activities. Many grades did this last year and it proved to be beneficial with both supplies and parent volunteers. Grade-Level Coordinators will be selected to help encourage this type of planning. All parties begin at 1:00 p.m. and last approximately one hour. Arrive about 15-20 minutes early to set up - or as the teacher requests. This is an excellent time to involve parents who cannot normally come to school events - please promote parent participation. Refer to the sign-up sheets for these parties - make sure everyone who signed up gets a phone call or e-mail.

1. **The December holiday party** should be a carefully planned event, avoiding issues over religious themes or Santa Claus. Please feel free to contact your teacher or Room Parent Chair to evaluate any ideas you may have. I trust you realize that there is quite a diversity of backgrounds and beliefs here at Northwood, and we do not want to alienate anyone. Appropriate plans would include a snack, game/book reading and a craft. Rotating stations between classrooms work well. Please see PTA calendar for dates of party.
2. **The May party is an end-of-year celebration.** Games are usually played on these days, as the kids are too excited to make crafts. Outdoor picnics and/or sundae making are popular choices too. SAFETY is a primary issue. Please carefully evaluate your plans, recognizing how excitable the children are at this point in the year. This is another excellent opportunity to work together to plan grade-level activities. Please see PTA calendar for dates of party.
3. **Small holidays are not recognized with parties in grades 1-5.** Kindergarten classes can celebrate the small holidays as requested and approved by the teacher. Examples of small holidays are Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter and Mother's Day. The general rule of thumb is that in Kindergarten you may suggest activities, and in the other grades the teacher should approach you with ideas that tie in with her plans. It is appropriate to offer your help when you know a big day is approaching. While planning parties are certainly a lot of fun, our focus must be on educational time. These days are exciting enough without adding much to them. Most teachers already plan their curriculum to include these holidays.

PTA LIAISON

Our PTA sponsors many fun events for our Northwood children and families to enjoy. You may be called upon to help find volunteers to staff/chaperone these events and help provide prizes or supplies. Examples are: BINGO nights, Movie Nights (K-3), Music Nights (4-5), the Book Fair, Field Days, and the Fall Carnival. We also have opportunities to help beautify and maintain the school grounds through the Landscaping Committee programs including Hands-On Atlanta Day (in fall - please see PTA calendar for date). You will receive updates on these programs throughout the year. A tentative calendar of school events is available after the Room Parent orientation meeting.

TEACHER APPRECIATION

Traditionally, Room Parents coordinate some sort of "gift" (such as flowers or handmade cards) from all the children in the class and assist in providing lunch for the teachers and assistants. Teacher Appreciation Day will be held in the spring (please see PTA calendar for date). Last year, the PTA provided a school-wide lunch for all teachers with dessert contributions from several room parents. The PTA will decide early in the year whether they will sponsor this event again this year.

SNACKS DURING STANDARDIZED TESTS

Your teacher may ask that you help coordinate voluntary donations of healthy snacks for her to distribute during periods of standardized testing. Please discuss this with your teacher.

PTA MEMBERSHIP

All Room Parents are required to be members of the PTA. If you have not joined, please do so as soon as possible. By joining, you demonstrate your involvement in our whole school.

VIPS /VOLUNTEER HOURS

All time you spend supporting the classroom activities count toward our VIPS program. This Fulton County program rewards each school with monetary grants and awards based on hours reported. Please log on to our VIPS computer located by the front desk. This computer system tracks volunteer hours within the school. Also, don't forget to log out when leaving the school. Hours are not limited to in-class participation but also any time committed to those activities outside school such as phone calls, shopping, typing notes, etc. Keep track of your 'at home' volunteer hours and record them monthly on the cards at the sign in desk. It is a good idea to mention this program in any newsletters to parents and at Curriculum Night.

SCHOOL SECURITY

Please observe all security and sign-in procedures whenever you are on Northwood property. You should sign in and out at the front desk, wear a nametag or button and access the buildings through the front doors. (A request sheet for buttons is normally located at the sign-in desk. If you are in school often - and most Room Parents are - please obtain and use a button. The temporary name badges printed by the new VIPS system are expensive. When you sign in you can *opt not to print* the name badge.)

If you have small children and choose to leave your child(ren) at **Kid's Stay-N-Play** while you are at Northwood, they have a discount program. Please ask them for details. If you can, teaming up with other parents in similar circumstances is a wonderful way to keep everyone (teachers, students, moms and our little ones) happy!

FINANCES

Funding for classroom activities comes from two sources. The PTA provides a \$100 allowance for each class to fund class activities. In addition, as Room Parent(s) you may solicit voluntary donations from parents to cover the costs of these activities.

1. The PTA allowance should be used on activities in or for the classroom, not teacher gifts. Receipts must be presented (no exceptions) to the PTA Treasurer along with a "Request for Reimbursement" form. One is attached. PTA Board Members have boxes in the PTA office. Please submit your receipts to me. I will sign them and forward to the PTA Treasurer. Please do this as soon as the \$100 has been spent to avoid delays near the year-end deadline of **April 28, 2007**. If you have not spent the \$100 by then, please contact me. Reimbursements will be made to the head or designated Room Parent and he/she can disburse among multiple Room Parents.
2. It is acceptable to request voluntary donations from parents to support classroom activities approved by your child's teacher. Attaching a self-addressed envelope to the flyer helps. All letters/flyers sent home need to be submitted to the teacher for approval. Please allow her plenty of time to review them.
 - a. It is acceptable to ask for money in one of two ways: 1) You may ask for a lump sum (typically \$15-20) at the beginning of the year; or 2) you may ask for \$3-5 for each party, \$3-5 for other classroom activities (BINGO prize bags, birthday bags, etc.), plus \$3-5 per child for end of the year teacher gifts. Most parents find it less work to ask for one amount at the beginning of the school year. Asking for contributions of supplies such as craft materials, paper goods, and food is another way of planning for parties.
 - b. For Kindergarten or other classes where there are two or more teachers and/or multiple small holidays, you may ask for the upper end of the ranges (\$20 for the one-time request or \$5 if asking activity-by-activity) to cover the cost of the extra activities, birthday(s) and gift(s).

- c. **Remember this is a request for a voluntary contribution.** There are many ways parents can be included if a monetary donation is not possible.

MISCELLANEOUS

- There are some office supplies in the PTA office for you to use.
- Copies for Room Parent newsletters should be made on the PTA copiers. One copier is to be used when making 1-25 copies; the other for more than 25 copies. Copies for teachers should not be made on these copiers.
- Oriental Trading Company and other catalogues for the Room Parents will be in the PTA room. Bulk orders save shipping costs and allow classes to purchase closer to the number they need and reduce waste. **Talk with other Room Parents to see if you can share.**
- **Again, ALWAYS go over plans with your teacher before ordering or planning events.**

2006-07 Room Parent Chairperson

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