**ROOM PARENT HANDBOOK**

**Mason-Rice School**

**2017-2018**

September 2017

Thank you for volunteering to be a Room Parent. Whether this is your first time as a Room Parent or your sixth, the teachers and the PTO appreciate your efforts and are grateful for your help.

The Mason-Rice community is only as strong as the links that we create. As Room Parents, the PTO hopes that you will serve as a link to each and every parent in your classroom. The more parents are informed of events happening both in the classroom and in the school, the more likely they are to become involved and, in turn, the closer they will feel to the community.

We would like to emphasize that the PTO appreciates your time and dedication and wants you to be reimbursed for your expenses. The PTO gives each class a $50 stipend to reimburse parents for out-of-pocket expenses that support activities in the classroom. Please make sure to keep your receipts to submit for reimbursement. Section 9 of this handbook explains in greater detail the uses of the stipend and the procedure for being reimbursed.

Have fun this year! Being a Room Parent is a great opportunity for you to make new friendships. Thank you again—and please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Best,

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**ROOM PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

# GET TOGETHER WITH YOUR CO-ROOM PARENT(S) AND LET YOUR TEACHER KNOW YOU ARE THE ROOM PARENT(S)—AND THEN STAY IN CONTACT WITH YOUR TEACHER

Each teacher may have his or her own ideas about how you can help out. Some teachers need help getting volunteers for field trips, class parties or writing workshops. Others may want help in soliciting donations to the classroom for art or science projects. Staying in contact with your teacher throughout the year ensures that he or she is getting the parent support needed, and also strengthens your personal connection to the classroom.

# INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO YOUR CLASS AT THE OPEN HOUSE

Please ask your teacher beforehand for a minute or two to introduce yourselves briefly during the Open House. Prior to that evening, please download your class list and contact information following the instructions sent to you via e-mail. Please bring this list to the Open House and ask parents to check the accuracy of their information on the list – especially e-mail addresses! Additionally, the Open House is a good time to introduce the library volunteer program and request a volunteer to host the class’s fall social, if you don’t already have one.

We recommend that you send an e-mail/letter to your class parents introducing yourselves and providing an overview of the year’s events inviting parent participation*.* A sample letter will be provided to you. This can also be a good opportunity to test that everyone is receiving your messages.

# CREATE A CLASS E-MAIL LIST

All parents need to be aware of class events, school events, volunteer opportunities, etc. Most of this information will come directly from the PTO or your teacher. Periodically, however, the Room Parent Coordinators or your teacher will ask you to forward school- or class-related announcements to the parents in your class. Many of these announcements relate to upcoming PTO events and are therefore time sensitive.

We ask for your help in ensuring that these messages are sent in a timely manner. Class e-mail lists are helpful in this process, but not all parents have e-mail or check it regularly—so be sure to have a plan for reaching parents who aren’t readily accessible by e-mail. The PTO also uses MySchoolAnywhere for our school directory. As a Room Parent you have the ability to send an email to your entire class, or just the primary parents in your class. This function saves you from having to type in email addresses. Once you are logged in to the website under “Your Account” you will see the “Room Parent Email” function. Please contact us if you need further help in using this resource.

Please remember that the contact information you receive as a Room Parent should only be used to communicate school-related events and information. It should never be used for any other purpose or disseminated outside of the school community. Additionally, Room Parents have found [www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com)to be a very helpful tool. Many classes have used it for things like the Fall Social potluck, and to sign up for teacher-requested supplies.

# FALL SOCIAL

Each class should organize an adult-only [potluck] social event in the fall for the parents in your class, ideally before the middle of November. This gathering is a great way to get to know other families and put names on new faces you’ve seen in the hallways. It can be whatever kind of event you’d like—a wine and cheese party, a dessert and coffee get-together, etc. Room Parents of Grade 5 students may choose to consolidate into a grade-wide event, but Room Parents in earlier grades are encouraged to stick to individual class events.

# RAFFLE

One of the PTO’s primary fundraisers is a kids’ raffle. Each class chooses a raffle basket theme, and families are asked to donate small items related to that theme to fill the basket. Room Parents coordinate the process by soliciting contributions in the form of items or money that can then be used by you to shop for the basket. You should keep track of the contents of your class basket, but Raffle Coordinator and helpers handle the wrapping and organizing of the basket items. **It is important to communicate to all parents that any contribution is entirely voluntary.**

# END-OF-YEAR PARTY

Room Parents typically consult with their teacher about organizing an end-of-year party for the class during the last week or two of school. Parties have been held in the classroom, on the playground, at the Newton Centre playground (aka Purple Playground), or in a nearby child’s home. The only refreshments permitted are popsicles, due to allergy concerns.

Kindergarten classrooms have a grade-wide end of year party which takes place after the Kindergarten concert. All parents are invited to attend and the Room Parents help to coordinate a grade-wide brunch.

5th grade classrooms have a grade-wide end of year party which is coordinated by the graduation committee.

# TEACHER GIFT POLICY

Our teachers are wonderful and many parents want to do something to acknowledge them. We suggest two ways of recognizing teachers: 1) donate a book through the Mason-Rice Gift Book Program in honor of a special teacher, and/or 2) make a donation through the Newton Schools Foundation in the teacher’s honor. Details on these programs can be found at [www.masonrice.org](http://www.masonrice.org) and [www.newtonschoolsfoundation.org](http://www.newtonschoolsfoundation.org).

The Newton Public Schools "Gift and Solicitations Policy for Staff" was updated in May 2015 and is included below.  It can also be found online at: <http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/domain/1063>

**STAFF GIFT AND SOLICITATIONS POLICY**

**The Newton Public Schools Staff Gifts and Solicitations Policy are updated and incorporate current Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law M.G.L. c. 268A. This replaces the earlier 1991 policy.**

**Newton Public Schools allows a group gift to an individual staff member only if the gift is identified as being from the entire class, the identity of the givers and the individual amounts are not disclosed to the recipient, and the gift does not exceed $150 per school year. This differs from a gift for the classroom (\*).**

**Individual gifts of appreciation in the form of sentimental tokens are allowed. Gifts of commercial value are not permitted.**

**NPS allows and encourages giving to charitable organizations such as school PTO’s or the Newton Schools Foundation’s Honor Thy Teacher Program which honors staff while supporting our schools.**

**For any questions about this policy and our procedures, please contact the Department of Human Resources.**

**\*Please see the Equity Policy for information on classroom gifts or donations.**

Classroom supplies do not fall under the Massachusetts Ethics Reform law or the Newton Public School policy. In June, Room Parents often organize the creation of a teacher gift from the children, such as a scrapbook or craft project, compilation of letters or notes from the students, etc. They may also choose to organize a gift for the classroom (e.g., books, art supplies, science supplies, etc.)

When organizing a class gift, any monetary contributions/requests should be modest ($5-$10 per family) and voluntary. The gift must be from the whole group and not exceed $150 per school year.

5th grade classrooms will handle teacher gifts through the graduation committee.

# PTO HELP

The PTO will request your help in soliciting volunteers for various community building and fundraising events throughout the year. A few examples are the Book Fair in the fall, the Kids’ Raffle Basket Fundraiser as well as Teacher Appreciation Day, both in the spring. Requests made by the PTO for volunteers will be communicated to Room Parents prior to each event.

# PTO STIPEND

The PTO gives each class a $50 stipend to reimburse parents for out-of-pocket expenses that support activities in the classroom. In past years, these expenses have included supplies for special classroom events or projects. Please make sure to keep your receipts to submit for reimbursement. If your class has not used the $50 stipend by the end of the year, the PTO will consider other uses for the money on a case-by-case basis.

To get reimbursed, either 1) Go online to the treasury section of the PTO website (under PTO Business)or 2) Obtain a hard copy of the check request form in the Treasurer’s box in the front lobby. Fill out the form, attach all relevant receipts, and put it in the green folder in the Treasurer’s box. The Treasurer will cut you a check shortly and place your reimbursement check back in the green folder, inside the Treasurer’s box.

# LIBRARY

Parent library volunteers are an important component of the school’s library program. Our librarian needs one parent volunteer per week to help out during the class time so that she can focus her attention on the students. The library volunteer will be checking in, checking out, and shelving the books—not reading to the class.

**This year the Library Sign-Up form has been created for you already.** The link will be emailed to you and then you can immediately share it with your class. Please copy LibraryAtMasonRice@gmail.com on the distribution email when you send it out so that our administrator can use the class emails to populate the sign-up groups for each class.

We also ask that you forward the link to your teacher so that they can post it on their class website to make it easy for parents to find. Room Parents should periodically check the sign-up sheet to see if additional volunteers are needed and if so send out reminders to the class with the link to sign-up.

**Wishing you a wonderful and enjoyable school year. Thank you for being a Room Parent!**