

September 2004

Dear Friend of Woodcrest School:

Thank you very much for dedicating your time and energy as a Room Parent for the 2004-2005 school year!

Increased involvement of parents and families is often cited as one of the most important ways to improve public schools. A variety of studies (Henderson & Berla, 1994) confirms that parent involvement makes an enormous impact on students' attitude, attendance, and academic achievement. The resulting partnerships between parents and teachers can increase student achievement and promote better cooperation between home and school.

Your time and devotion to this worthwhile endeavor will help bridge the connection between families and the classroom community. If I can ever be of help or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 429-2058 or [gpriolo@chclc.org](mailto:gpriolo@chclc.org).

Respectfully,

Gino Priolo  
Principal

September 2004

Dear Room Parent:

I am delighted to welcome you as a Woodcrest Room Parent for the school year 2004-2005. Thank you for volunteering your time to help create classroom environments filled with a diverse array of activities ranging from simple seasonal parties to outside field trips.

Room Parents not only have parties to coordinate, calls to make, and schedules to arrange, but often will be called upon by other parents for answers and information. To help you with these tasks, the ROOM PARENT SURVIVAL GUIDE was created.

It is my hope that this SURVIVAL GUIDE will save you time and energy. Inside the SURVIVAL GUIDE you'll find the responsibilities for the headroom parent and the other designated room parents, samples of letters to send home to parents, and suggestions for each of the seasonal parties. There is also a list of individuals who have volunteered to help you through the process if you get stuck or need more ideas or information.

I look forward to working with each of you to make this an enriching experience for our students, parents, and faculty. Should you have any questions or need further information at any time during the year, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Debra Faye  
Room Parent Coordinator  
795-5133  
[dfaye1@prodigy.net](mailto:dfaye1@prodigy.net)

**Everything you wanted to know about room parenting...**  
**But were afraid to ask.**  
**(or how I figured things out the hard way)**

Contrary to popular belief, being a room parent is lots of fun. Even being the head room parent is a fun (although sometimes challenging) job. This guide is intended to hopefully answer some of the nuts and bolts questions that you may have about being a room parent. It is by no means an all-inclusive document and is intended as a guide for the process. Please feel free to use what works for you and to make modifications along the way. Remember to always check with the teacher as to what he or she needs from you as a room parent.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

There are lists of responsibilities for both the head room parent and the other designated room parents included in this guide. Check out the lists and ask the Room Parent Coordinator if you have questions. The Room Parent Coordinator's job is to field questions and she/he will be happy to help you find the answers you need.

**PARTIES:**

There are four major classroom parties for the year: Halloween, Winter, Valentine's Day, and End-of-Year. You will find a brief section with suggestions for each party at the end of this guide, but here are some general rules of thumb to get you started. The Halloween Party, Winter Party, and Valentine's Day parties will be held at the end of the day between 2:15 and 3:15 p.m. The times for the End of Years parties are decided near the end of the year when class days are assigned.

The **HALLOWEEN PARTY** generally follows the school's costume parade. The principal (in costume) leads the kids in their costumes through the school and outside around the playground and then everyone returns to their classrooms for a party.

The **WINTER PARTY** is just that...a winter celebration. Stick with snowmen, snowwomen, snowflakes, snow anything. Remember, that although we live in very diverse community, the district has mandated that this is not the time for a lesson in cultural diversity. No Christmas trees, dreidels, candy canes, etc.

**VALENTINE'S DAY** is the feel good party. Please make sure that the teacher sends home a list of all of the kids' names in the class so that no one gets left out or gets their feelings hurt.

Teachers are busy people. They won't always remember that you, as room parents, need additional time to get your troops mobilized and so the most helpful thing you can do is to ask them at least ONE MONTH AHEAD OF TIME what it is that they would like you do to for each particular party (Halloween, Winter, Valentine's Day or End of year). Advance notification is also important for parents who need to arrange childcare or time off from work in order to participate in classroom activities.

You will find that there some teachers who prefer to let the room parents plan and handle the parties while there are other teachers who have very specific ideas that they wish to see implemented. Please keep in mind that it is the teacher's classroom and that room parents are there to enhance the educational process for our children, not to set programming. Not all teachers run parties at the same time of day or for the same length of time. Find out from the teacher the length of the party and then you can discuss with the teacher any specific ideas/themes, crafts, etc that you would like to do. If the teacher leaves the party to the room parents' discretion, the following formula or a variation of it works well for kindergarten through third grade.

### **BASIC PARTY PLAN 101:**

Using the following three or four components, either as stations or run sequentially, is a pretty tried and true method for the seasonal parties (Halloween, Winter, Valentine's Day) for the students in kindergarten through third grade. Keep in mind that the crafts/stories/games need to be age appropriate and "do-able" in the time permitted. The fourth and fifth graders generally do not want parents around for their parties and plan their own parties (with teacher input) and then just ask the room parents to supply the paper goods and the food.

### **SNACKS:**

Please keep in mind that the kids only have a limited amount of time to eat and clean up. If you serve **one (1) sweet snack** (cupcakes, cookies, ice cream, etc) and **one (1) salty/crunchy snack** (chips, pretzels, popcorn, etc) with a **drink** (juice boxes are easiest) the kids will be happy and their parents will be happy, too, since the kids won't come home sick from too much junk.

## **GAMES/STORIES**

Anything simple and related to the holiday or theme you have planned. Some teachers will have some games/stories that they want you to use and others will give you free rein. There are some suggestions for games for each party at the back of this guide, along with the names of some parents who are willing to share their expertise with games/books for parties in the classroom.

## **CRAFTS:**

The kids in kindergarten through third grade love to make something to take home. Keep in mind that the crafts need to be age appropriate. If you aren't sure whether or not a particular class can handle making the craft you have selected, make a sample of the craft and show it to the teacher ahead of time. There are usually things that you can do to make almost any craft work for a class. It might just mean doing more prep ahead of time. Again, check out the ideas at the end of this booklet and feel free to call any of the people listed for extra ideas.

## **END OF YEAR PARTY**

Each class, grades 1-5, has a collective end of year party, i.e. all of the first graders are together, all second graders, etc. The head room parents from the various grades will have to coordinate with each other to plan and implement the party. The party usually last about two and a half hours including lunch since there are traditionally only half days during the final days of school when the parties are held. It is easiest to do a collection and have pizza delivered. The pizzas are supplemented with donations of paper goods, snacks and dessert. Keep in mind re the end of year party that it is almost always hot and in addition to food, you'll also need ice and coolers. It's often helpful to ask for small bottles of water in addition to juice boxes. You also should try and get a count for how many parents will be attending the party so you can include them in the count for food.

Some grades prefer to have unstructured play for the whole time while other grades like to have some games and crafts lined up. Remember to keep it simple and to have some back up activities planned in case it rains and you have to keep everyone entertained in the APR for that time period. There are no rain dates for end of year picnics.

Each **Kindergarten** class has its own separate end of year party, both the AM and PM classes. Although you might want to check with the head room parents for the other kindergarten classes, each head room parent will

need to coordinate with their own individual room parents and their classroom teacher to come up with an appropriate plan for their individual class. Keeping with the snack, craft, game/story format will probably work best for this age group.

### **TEACHER GIFTS:**

Classroom gifts are not mandatory. If you chose to have a class collection for a holiday and/or end of year gift, keep in mind that not everyone can or will participate. You can suggest up to \$5.00 per teacher, per gift and \$3.00 per classroom aide. For example, if the class has one teacher and one aide, you can ask for \$8.00 for the two. If you have two teachers and an aide, you might ask for \$13.00. **REMEMBER, not everyone can or will contribute the same amount and you need to be flexible about the situation.** You will find a sample of a holiday gift collection letter at the end of this booklet.

### **A WORD ABOUT FUNDS:**

You are allowed to request \$5.00 per family at the beginning of the year in order to create a “working kitty” for craft/party supplies for the year. Select one room parent to be the treasurer. You will avoid problems later for yourself if you let the parents know from the beginning that you will be asking for \$5.00 later in the year for the end of year party. Again, keep in mind that not everyone will participate, and that you need to be flexible about it. Any funds not used from your original \$5.00 collection can be applied to the end of year party. Some classes collect \$5.00 per family at the beginning of the year and then ask for donations for crafts, parties, etc throughout the year so the money collected at the beginning of the year ends up being used for the pizza at the end of year party. A word to the wise, make sure that you settle up all money questions and accounts before the end of year party, that way any unused fund can be used by the class before everyone leaves for the summer.

# **HEAD ROOM PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Meet with the teacher(s) to discuss upcoming events. **No events may be planned without teacher input!!!**
2. Arrange for two (2) parents to supervise lunch and recess during the teacher luncheon in May, and the staff holiday party in December.
3. Arrange a meeting with your room parents.
4. Prepare for the following parties:
  - a. Halloween
  - b. Winter
  - c. Valentine's Day
  - d. End of year picnic/party (**NO MORE THAN \$5.00 PER STUDENT. See numbers 6 and 8 below.**)
5. Send out a letter introducing yourself, how you can be reached, and request parental permission for release of phone numbers (**for phone chain purposes only!**)
6. Send home a letter (can be combined with number 4 above) requesting **NO MORE THAN \$5.00 PER STUDENT** for class parties for the year.
7. Send out letters throughout the year to keep parents informed about classroom parties and activities.
8. Be sensitive when you solicit funds for parties or gifts to the fact that not everyone can or will donate the same amount. **Contributions are always voluntary!**
9. Prepare phone chain.
10. Copy list of children's names for other room parents in class.
11. Designate one parent to collect all monies and act as "treasurer."

12. Always remember to try and include all parents in the class (not just those parents who signed up to be room parents).
13. **ALWAYS USE DISCRETION** when speaking with students and other parents.
14. Say “thank-you” loudly and repeatedly to the parents who help out. Your job is much easier and the students really benefit the more you get other parents involved.
15. If any other problems arise, please do not hesitate to contact the Room Parent Coordinator: Deb Faye at 795-5133 or at [dfaye1@prodigy.net](mailto:dfaye1@prodigy.net).

*Benefits of Being Head Room Parent*

1. Gratitude from all the other room parents for taking on the job!
2. Extra frosting at parties.
3. First dibs on field trips if you are available to attend.

## ROOM PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

### *Kindergarten-Grade 3*

1. Meet with your head room parent to discuss upcoming events.
2. Help prepare for the following parties, using the guidelines listed under the Head Room Parent's Responsibilities:
  - a. Halloween
  - b. Winter
  - c. Valentine's Day
  - d. End of year picnic/party
3. Prepare special requests from teachers such as crafts and cooking projects.
4. When called upon by the head room parent, activate the classroom phone chain.
5. Remember to use discretion when talking with students and other parents.
6. Chaperone class trips if called upon and if available.
7. Please "play nice" with the other parents. Remember, our kids model what they see and hear from us.

### Grades 4-5

1. You are responsible for # 2-7 above
2. Students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade plan their own parties and parents are asked to send in food and paper products throughout the year.

3. Parents in Grade 5 will be asked to help prepare a Thanksgiving feast
4. Parents in grade 5 also will be asked to work on various end of year “graduation” related activities for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
5. Please “play nice” with the other parents. Remember, our kids model what they see and hear from us.

### Suggestions

1. Keep all receipts and give to class treasurer.
2. Settle up accounts before the end of the school, it’s preferable to settle all accounts before or at the End of Year Party, so that any money left is used by the class that contributed them.
3. Ask for donations of food and paper products.
4. Call upon other parents to help out, not just other designated room parents. Remember the kids’ benefit when more parents are involved.
5. Use discretion with your list of phone numbers!
6. ALL PHONE NUMBERS ARE CONFIDENTIAL!
7. If the room parents choose to collect for a class gift, please keep in mind that not everyone can afford the same amount. (See numbers 6 and 8 under Head Room Parent Responsibilities.
8. If any problems arise, please do not hesitate to contact the Room Parent Coordinator: Deb Faye at 795-5133 or at [dfaye1@prodigy.net](mailto:dfaye1@prodigy.net)

# HALLOWEEN

## FOOD IDEAS

(Always ask the teacher if there are any food allergies)

Sweet: cupcakes, brownies, cake, cookies

Crunchy/Salty: potato chips, cheese curls, Doritos, pretzels

Beverages: juice boxes (Keep in mind that big bottles of juice require cups!)

## GAMES

### **Pin the Hat on the Witch (individual)**

Pin the hat, wart, broom, nose, etc on the Witch (Teams)

(the same can be done with scarecrow, vampire, etc.)

Pass the Pumpkin (hot potato)

Scavenger Hunt – collect rubber snakes, spiders, pumpkins, brooms, ghosts, Witches, etc from fellow class parents. Hide the objects in the classroom or outside (with teacher permission) during the parade and have the students find the objects.

Candy corn Bingo – Use game cards with spiders, bats, witches, ghosts, etc instead of numbers and use candy corn for the markers.

## CRAFTS

Oriental Trading Company has great crafts ready to be assembled.

Make your own Spooky Cupcakes – combines craft and snack. Have students make witch or goblin faces using licorice hair, candy corn noses, candy eyes.

Caramel apples (older students)

Rice Krispies Treat Monsters – same idea as cupcakes but make the treats ahead time in cups with sticks in them.

Fall Candle Holder – gather small glass jars, clean them out and have the kids glue colored tissue leaves to the outside. Send home with a tea light inside.

Frankenstein hands – use clear or green plastic gloves. Have students place candy corn in the fingers for nails and then fill with popcorn. Make sure gloves clean before you start.

Make/Decorate large bags to use for trick or treat

Make mini scarecrows

Make a hanging mobile of white cloth ghosts, styrofoam spiders, etc.

# WINTER

## **THEME IDEAS:**

Winter Wonderland  
Snow  
Ice  
New Year's Eve

## **FOOD IDEAS:**

***Same general food groups as for Halloween***

Serve hot hors d'oeuvres for a New Year's party.

## **GAMES**

Pin the hands on the clock (New Year's Eve)  
"Freeze" dance  
Pin the arms, legs, nose, buttons, mouth, etc on the Snowman  
Drop the snowflake in the bottle

## **CRAFTS**

***Snowman doorknob holders***

Pine tree air fresheners (for cars)  
Felt mittens for refrigerator magnets  
Beaded snowflakes for coasters or sun catchers  
Snow globes made from baby food jars.

# Valentine's Day and End of Year Parties

## Valentine's Day

### FOOD IDEAS

Basic Party foods – you might want to stick with red and white for the colors

### GAMES/ACTIVITIES

Delivering Valentines

Opening Valentines

Valentine's Day Bingo – use valentine themed words (love, sweetheart, etc) and use candy conversation hearts for the markers.

Musical chairs

### CRAFTS

Make Valentines for parents (have extras available and be aware of possible blended family situation)

Make bookmarks or placemats with colored paper

Valentine Mobiles

Bird Houses/Feeders (older kids) to celebrate spring

Make holders for Valentines

## End of Year Party

(Reminder - no siblings are allowed to attend)

### FOOD IDEAS

Order pizza – have the pies cut into 16 pieces per pie

Juice boxes

Small water bottles

Watermelon

Chips, pretzels, cheese curls, etc.

Cookies, brownies, cupcakes, etc

### GAMES

Relay races

Tug of war

Water balloon toss

Face painting

Hot Potato

Sponge toss

## Sample – Introductory letter to parents

Dear Parents,

I am the head room parent for \_\_\_\_\_'s classroom. On behalf of the other room parents for our class, I am writing this note to let you know about some of the activities that we have planned for this year. I am also compiling a list of parents who would like, or are willing, to help out with class parties and/or trips. In addition, the room parents are requesting that, if at all possible, each family contribute \$5.00 to create a fund to help pay for the class' parties and activities this year. This amount covers the Halloween, Winter Holiday, and Valentine's Day parties. We usually request an additional amount for the end of year party because we traditionally order pizza at that time. In the past, we also have collected money for both class holiday gifts and end of year gifts for our teachers and aides. We will be sending home more information regarding the giving of class gifts, as we get closer to those times. Please fill out the attached information sheet so that we will be able to keep in touch with you.

The school's policy is not to give out the children's names and phone numbers arbitrarily, but we need your permission to compile a list of names and phone numbers for each child in the class to be used to create phone tree for the room parents to use in case of an emergency or other issue that arises suddenly. *Please note that the list only will be used to contact you regarding activities that pertain specifically to our class or in the event that we need to activate a class phone tree for emergency purposes and not for any other purpose.* Without this information, we will not be able to contact you and let you know what is happening in class. There is a space on the attached sheet to include your home phone number and e-mail address if applicable. **We need a response whether you are or are not willing to be a part of the phone tree, so please fill out the attached form and return it in an envelope marked Room Parents by \_\_\_\_\_.**

Thanks in advance for your help and I look forward to meeting each of you as we work together to help our children have a great year. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Name

Phone Number

*Room Parent Contact Information*

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)'s Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address(es) \_\_\_\_\_

I give permission for my home phone number to be published for the room parents phone chain purposes only.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Parent Classroom Volunteer Information*

Please check any and all of the following that apply to you:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am available to help in the classroom during parties.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to contribute snacks or baked goods.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to contribute materials to help with arts and crafts projects.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to contribute paper goods (napkins, paper plates, cups, etc.).

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to contribute bottles of juice or juice boxes.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have enclosed \$5.00 to help with the cost of materials and supplies for this year's parties and activities.

## Sample-\$ for gift letter

Dear Parents:

It's that time of year again when we are planning our Winter Holiday Party. As part of our holiday celebration, the room parents would like to give everyone in the class the opportunity to contribute towards a group gift for teacher's name, and aide's name. Although no one is obligated to contribute a particular amount, we would like to request that each family, if they choose, contributes \$8.00 dollars towards the class holiday gift. We will take the amount received and divide it to purchase gifts (The breakdown is \$5.00 for teacher's name and \$3.00 for aide's name). If you would like to have your child included in this group gift, please check the form below and return it with \$10.00 in an envelope marked "Room Mother by \_\_\_\_\_.

If you would be willing to contribute baked goods, a healthy snack, or juice boxes for the party, please indicate that on the form below. If you have any questions, feel free to call me at \_\_\_\_\_.

Thanks,

NAME

In order to make sure everyone's preference is counted, please return this sheet with your preferences whether or not you choose to have your child participate.

---

\_\_\_ Yes. Include us in the group gift. We have enclosed our \$8.00.

\_\_\_ No. Thanks, but we'll handle any gifts we choose to give.

\_\_\_ Yes, I am willing to contribute food or drink to the party.  
Please call and let me know what you need.

Parent's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Sample – End of year party info letter**

Dear Parents,

School's almost out, and it's time for the end of year class party! **Our class picnic is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_, from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. All parents are welcome to attend the end of the year party, but in keeping with school policy, younger siblings are not allowed to attend.**

All \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ grades are going to be having their picnics together, so we are going to be pooling our resources for the snacks and to order pizza. **We are suggesting that each family contribute 5.00 towards the cost of the party.** This covers the cost of the pizzas and other supplies.

If you are interested in contributing to a class gift for the teacher, please include and additional \$5.00. **\*\*\*(AMOUNT TO BE DETERMINED BY NUMBER OF TEACHERS/AIDES IN THE CLASSROOM.)**

Please complete and return the form below with any monies included in an envelope marked "Room Mother," by \_\_\_\_\_. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at \_\_\_\_\_.

Thanks for helping us make this a great day for our kids!

NAME

---

Parent/Guardian name: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I /we will be attending the end of year class party.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I /we are unable to attend the end of year class party.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to supply snacks or paper goods for the party.  
(Thanks; I will call you next week regarding what is still needed.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is \$5.00 towards the cost of the party.

\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is \$5.00 towards a class gift for the teacher.

## *Sample – Teacher Luncheon letter*

Dear Parents:

\_\_\_\_\_, the room parent coordinator, contacted me today with a request for the Staff Appreciation Luncheon which is being held on \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_. In order for our students' teachers and aides to attend and enjoy the luncheon, we need two parents to watch the class during lunch and recess.

Please contact me ASAP if you are available to help out with watching the class on \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. You can reach me at home at \_\_\_\_\_, via e-mail at \_\_\_\_\_ or send a note in with your child addressed to \_\_\_\_\_/Room Parent.”

Thanks in advance for being willing to pitch in and help out with this endeavor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Head Room Parent*

## SOME FINAL WORDS TO THE WISE

The following individuals have lots of experience with the room parent experience at Woodcrest and have graciously agreed to be “on-call” for any questions you may have throughout the year. They are great resources and are more than happy to help. Feel free to call on any or all of them.

Christy Carlson	857-0343
Felicia O’Brien	216-7717
Dianna McDaniel	354-3163

**ALWAYS** check with the teacher before you plan any activity and make sure that it meets with their approval before proceeding with your final arrangements.

**REMEMBER** due to insurance regulations, non-enrolled siblings may not attend classroom functions. Please make any necessary arrangements for childcare if you are going to be in the classroom fulfilling your room parent responsibilities.

**RESPECT** all students’ privacy. If a child or teacher reveals personal information, regard it as a confidence.

**TREAT** all students fairly, equally, and positively.

**REMEMBER ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS TO CHILDREN** and that you are a role model for the children you work with in the classroom in your dress, attitude and behavior.

**ENJOY WORKING WITH THE KIDS AND HAVE A GREAT YEAR!**