



Bells Mill Elementary School PTA
Room Parent Policies
2017-2018 School Year

Dear Room Parents,

Thank you for volunteering as a Room Parent!

You provide an invaluable service to the children, teachers, and parents of Bells Mill, not to mention the personal and priceless rewards.

In addition to coordinating class parties and events, a Room Parent is a helpful contact in streamlining communication between the PTA, the teacher and the parents in the class. Your involvement is an important element in the success of our Bells Mill Community to help make everyone feel welcome in the classroom.

The BMES PTA Guidelines for Room Parent policies, roles, and responsibilities follow.

1) Class Party Planning and Organization

- a) There are two parties each school year to help plan and organize:
Halloween and Valentine's Day!
- b) Teachers are not responsible for running class parties, but please remember to give the teacher an opportunity to express his/her expectations/needs/guidelines for his/her classroom.
- c) Plan what/how many activities and crafts you should prepare. Pinterest.com is a great resource for ideas!
- d) Are there any students with food allergies? Make sure to discuss all food and drink items with your teacher prior to the party. Look for food options that will be inclusive, however, feel free to encourage parents of kids with allergies to send in their own 'safe' treat if they are more comfortable doing so. We are also trying to limit the volume of sweets, so please keep the menu balanced.
- e) Contact the parents in your classroom prior to each celebration to raise awareness of the event, ask for donations of supplies, and ask for volunteers to help. Sign-Up Genius (www.signupgenius.com) is a great resource many parents are already familiar with!

2) Communication and Involvement

- a) Maintaining an open line of communication with the teacher and the parents of the classroom throughout the year is a key to having a successful classroom experience.
- b) Each class may have two or three Room Parents. However, all parents of the classroom are encouraged to participate in activities, and to share their opinions on decisions that the class makes as a whole (e.g. teacher gifts).
- c) Please contact the classroom teacher to inquire about the best way to reach each family in your classroom (by E-mail or phone). It may be that the Room Parents will send the teacher the communications to be distributed.
- d) Don't forget to get approval of classroom party plans from the teacher.



3) Suggested Funds Management Guidelines

- a) In recent years, a workable guideline for funds is to have only one collection at the beginning of the year for the Halloween Party, Valentine's Party, and teacher gifts. Please make sure to manage the classroom money thoughtfully.
- b) *The PTA makes the following recommendations for class gifts and class parties:*
 - i) We recommend that the Room Parents pick one Room Parent to collect donations up to \$25.00 per family. This should cover all costs. This is strictly voluntary.
 - ii) The class can spend $\frac{1}{3}$ of the amount collected for the Halloween Party, and $\frac{1}{3}$ on the Valentine's Day Party. The remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ can be used to purchase class gifts for the teacher. Of the $\frac{1}{3}$ set aside for teacher gifts, the PTA recommends spending $\frac{1}{2}$ for a holiday gift and $\frac{1}{2}$ for a year-end gift.
 - iii) The total class gift for the year should not exceed \$100. (thus, the class can use up to \$50. for a holiday gift and up to \$50. for a year end gift). This is a Bells Mill Elementary School PTA recommendation, and is separate from the MCPS gift limit policy.
 - iv) If there are funds remaining, the PTA asks that you make a donation to the Bear Hug Fund in the name of teacher.
 - v) For example, if 21 families contribute \$25. each (a total of \$525.), the class could budget for \$175. on each party, up to \$100. on the class gifts combined, and have funds of at least \$75. to be graciously received by the Bear Hug fund. If the teacher indicates that he/she would prefer the entire gift amount to go toward the Bear Hug fund, this is certainly an option.
- c) Each Room Parent will receive via E-mail an approved letter that you can distribute to the class so that you can build your classroom fund.
- d) Please keep in mind that everyone has different circumstances. Families may not always be able to give money but may be more than willing to provide paper goods, juice boxes, games, assemble gifts that the students create at home, or volunteer their time.

4) Individual Teacher Gifts - MCPS Guidelines

- a) There are specific MCPS guidelines about individual gift giving that must be followed by all parents.
- b) The MCPS policy states that the total gift amount for the year cannot exceed \$100. per child. If a parent exceeds the gift limit, the teacher or staff member is obligated to return the gift.
- c) Please follow the guidelines and don't place anyone in the awkward position of having to return a gift ;)
 - i) Any single gift cannot exceed \$25. (per child in the case of twins or siblings). This would include holiday and year-end gifts given directly from a family to a teacher or other staff member.
 - ii) If a group of parents want to pool their individual contributions to purchase a larger gift, this is allowed so long as no parent exceeds the individual \$25. limit per child, per gift. For example, six families can contribute \$25. each, in order to buy a teacher a year-end present worth \$150. The teacher must be informed that the gift is from all six families.



- iii) Please note that the total yearly gift amount of \$100. per child includes the amount donated in the initial collection of monies for the two parties (Halloween and Valentine's Day) and two teacher gifts (holiday and year end gifts). Thus, if a parent contributes \$25. to the class at the beginning of the year, only a small portion of that amount goes toward the class gift to the teacher (about \$5.). Then, $\frac{1}{2}$ of the \$5. goes toward a holiday gift (about \$2.50) and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the \$5. goes toward the end of the year gift (about \$2.50.). Therefore, if the parent gives a \$25. gift at the holidays and another at the end of the year, their total for the year (\$25. + \$25. + \$5.). This is well below the \$100. annual individual gift limit.

Please contact me with any questions/concerns/comments. Thank you for taking on this important role in the classroom this year. The support, time and energy exhibited by our Room Parents is valued by the family at Bells Mill Elementary School.

Here's to a great year!

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