

# Room Parent Handbook



*Homestead PTA*  
*2015-2016*

*Dear Room Parents,*

*Thank you for volunteering to be a Room Parent for your child's classroom for the 2015-2016 school year! Serving as a Room Parent is a great opportunity for you to be involved in the school and your child will love having you fulfill this role for their class! We appreciate all the time and energy you will spend making this an awesome year for the students, teachers and other parents at Homestead Elementary.*

*We hope you will find the following information helpful and informative in completing your responsibilities for the year ahead. I am available to address any questions or concerns that you may have. At any time, if you feel you are unable to fulfill the role of Room Parent, please let me know so that I can find a replacement.*

*Once again, thank you for volunteering your time as a Room Parent. Our goal, as Room Parents, is to be a positive asset to our school. I would like for us to work as a team, to make everyone's job easier and a lot more fun.*

*Betsy Gould*  
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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a guide for our Room Parents at Homestead Elementary and to present information and suggestions on how to fulfill that role.

One Room Parent contact per class is preferred; however, co-Room Parents may work together and take turns attending Grade Level Planning Meetings. As a Room Parent, you are a PTA representative. If you have not yet signed up for membership, please do so now. As a PTA representative, we also encourage you to attend the general PTA meetings during the school year.

All volunteers must complete a criminal history background check. You can find the “volunteer application” on the LISD website [www.lisd.net](http://www.lisd.net). Parents who volunteer to assist with in-class events must also have a completed background check on file.

## **Basic Questions and Answers about Being a Room Parent**

### **What does a Room Parent do?**

As a Room Parent, you will serve as a contact person between your teacher, class and grade level parents, and the PTA. The primary roles of a Room Parent include:

1. Host 2 classroom parties (Winter Party & Valentine Party); coordinate small teacher birthday celebration; coordinate parent volunteers as needed for parties and year-end “Summer Splash” Day
2. Coordinate the classroom auction basket
3. Work with your grade-level Room Parents to host one staff luncheon
4. Assist the PTA in recruiting volunteers, as needed, for the Teacher Cookie Exchange, Field Day, and other PTA activities
5. Assist your teacher as needed with classroom/grade-level tasks

### **Grade Level Coordinator**

One Room Parent will be named Grade Level Coordinator (GLC) for each grade level. The GLC will be responsible for relaying all necessary information from the lead teacher to the other Room Parents for that Grade Level.

### **Volunteers**

Room Parents should ask to receive assistance from other parent volunteers throughout the year. Volunteers may assist the Room Parent with preparing materials for parties, preparing and assisting at the teacher luncheon and assisting with the coordination of the classroom basket. Other opportunities may be available as identified by the Room Parent.

## Relationships

**Grade Level Coordinator (GLC) to Lead Teacher** – The GLC will serve as the main contact between the grade level Lead Teacher and the grade level Room Parents. The GLC should initiate the following communication plan PRIOR to each activity:

1. Email or meet with the Lead Teacher to learn the teachers' objectives and parameters for the party or activity. Room Parents should respect the wishes of the teacher concerning visits to the classroom, parties, special activities, etc. and execute their duties in accordance with the teacher's guidance.
2. The GLC will then call a meeting with the grade level Room Parents (please, only one representative per class) to discuss the teachers' objectives and parameters and to brainstorm ideas for party crafts, snacks and additional activities. Please see the "Classroom Parties & Teacher Birthday" section for important details.
3. The GLC will present the proposed ideas to the Lead Teacher for approval. If more than one idea is proposed, these ideas will be presented to the Lead Teacher for final selection.
4. The GLC will report approval to the Room Parents so they may begin making purchases and coordinating their combined efforts for party preparation.

**Room Parent to Teacher** – A Room Parent provides assistance to their assigned teacher as needed throughout the school year. This includes class parties, teacher birthday recognition, in-class projects, and PTA sponsored events. Establishing a good working relationship between the teacher and Room Parent requires open and frequent communication.

**Room Parents to Classroom Students** - The teacher will decide how much direct contact and involvement with students is appropriate.

**Room Parents to Other Students' Parents** - Room Parents will coordinate with other parents to arrange support of special events and activities. While Room Parents lead the planning and preparation of an event, it is important to allow other classroom parents to volunteer and participate. It is good to allow volunteers at least one to two weeks notice for class events or before soliciting items. Some parents may not be able to donate their time but are willing to donate items needed for parties or special events. Be sure that parents who attend the party help with clean-up.

**Room Parents to PTA** - A Room Parent's relationship with the PTA is to act as the classroom point of contact. Some PTA school wide events will require numerous volunteers. Room Parents will be responsible for communicating information about PTA events to the assigned classrooms.

### **Additional points to remember:**

- Respect the confidentiality that comes with your relationship with teachers and students.
- Open and frequent communication with teachers and class parents is important.
- Bring to each child a friendly, positive and kind attitude.
- Class parties are approximately 1-1/4 hours.
- Try to make it as easy for parents to volunteer and participate.
- Kindergarten and first grade teachers often use their Room Parents more frequently in the classroom than second through fifth grade teachers. The older students are usually more self-sufficient, and their classroom activities may require less assistance from parents.
- The Room Parent should take the lead for all events for the classroom that they are responsible for, utilize volunteers when available, and contact additional volunteers as needed. Room Parents may divide areas of responsibility between volunteers.

## **Making Introductions & Tracking Finances**

### **Introduction to Parents**

Send an introductory letter home to each family in your class early in the year, along with a form requesting their level of interest in volunteering or donating items (templates available at [www.homestead.my-pta.org](http://www.homestead.my-pta.org)). The letter should outline classroom and PTA events for the school year and allow parents the opportunity to volunteer their services. The letter should also include a reminder to submit a background check, if they have not done it this year.

This letter should also include a request for a suggested \$20 donation (see Donations section below) from parents for the class fund. These funds may be used to purchase teacher gifts and items for the class auction basket.

Please include a self-addressed envelope with the form, so parents may enclose their completed form and donation. Your teacher will distribute your letter, form and envelope for the students to take home and will return the envelopes to you as they are received. You may submit the cost of the paper and envelopes for reimbursement by the PTA.

### **Donations**

**All parent donations and contributions are VOLUNTARY and not required.** Many parents are willing to send in items instead of cash. In order to take pressure off of families that may not have the funds available, Room Parents are not allowed to request a specific amount of money from each child. However, most parents would like an idea of what amount would make a nice teacher gift from the class and a nice classroom basket for the auction. In your introduction letter, you may suggest a donation amount of \$20. Whether a family donates or not, each gift includes every child in the classroom.

Parent donations should be used ONLY to purchase the 3 teacher gifts from the class (Winter Party, Birthday, and End-of-year Gift) and items/gift cards for the classroom auction basket. Each teacher gift is not to exceed \$50. Therefore, you may wish to set aside \$150 to cover 3 gifts from the class. All remaining money can then be used to purchase items or gift cards for the classroom auction basket.

All cash/check donations from parents must be tracked and reported to the PTA at the end of the year. A tracking sheet is available on the PTA website for download. Additionally, all parents must receive a paper receipt for their cash/check donations. A booklet of blank receipts will be provided to the Room Parents. Receipts may be sent home with the student.

## **Activities/Events by Room Parents**

### **A. Classroom Parties & Teacher Birthday**

Party dates and times for all grade levels will be available on the PTA website and Room Parent calendar. Please confirm these dates with your teacher as they are subject to change.

The teacher may want you to plan an activity, snack, game and/or craft or provide instructions for the party. Please note that the craft and snack (and any other tangible items) must be consistent across all classrooms per grade level. Games and other activities may vary per classroom, if desired, as long as it is approved by your teacher. Please check with your teacher regarding any food allergies that students may have and pass this information on to all parents.

Party supplies may be reimbursed using your PTA classroom fund. Room parents should coordinate with party volunteers to provide assistance and/or additional supplies for the party (drinks, food, decorative paper products, etc.) if needed. Generic paper products already purchased by the PTA are available for your use. Please notify your GLC if you would like to use these paper products.

#### Winter Holiday Party

Winter parties are held 1-2 days before winter break. The class will present the teacher with a group gift (up to \$50 from parent donations).

#### Valentine's Party

This event is held in February on or around Valentine's Day. A teacher gift from the class is not given at this party.

#### End of Year "Summer Splash" Day

This event is held the last week of school. Each grade level will get to enjoy inflatable water slides and snow cones. This event is paid for by the PTA and does not require you to spend any portion of the \$75 allocated to your class at the beginning of the year; however, several parent volunteers will be needed to assist with the outside activities and Room Parents may be asked to help recruit these volunteers. The class will present the teacher with a group gift (up to \$50 from parent donations).

#### Teacher's Birthday

A calendar of teacher's birthdays is available at [www.homestead.my-pta.org](http://www.homestead.my-pta.org). The Room Parent may purchase a gift (up to \$50 from parent donations) as a group gift from the class. You may provide a cake or a treat for the teacher (the teacher's treat may not be served to the children) and a nutritious snack to the children. Some teachers do not allow anything to be served on this occasion; please check with your teacher prior to his/her party about food or party preferences.

### **B. Silent Auction/School Fundraiser**

Each classroom will provide a silent auction item such as a themed basket that will be placed up for bid. Room Parents are responsible for organizing this group effort and communicating ideas about themes and basket contents. Items (not gift cards) purchased for the classroom basket may be submitted for reimbursement from your PTA classroom fund. Gift cards for the auction basket must be purchased using parent donations only.

### **C. Teacher Appreciation Luncheon & Teacher Appreciation Week**

Teacher Appreciation Luncheon: At Homestead, teachers are recognized all year long instead of just observing one official teacher's appreciation week. Teachers and staff are treated to a luncheon in the Teacher's Lounge that is hosted by a different grade level every six weeks. The Grade Level Coordinator and Room Parents may decide on a theme and coordinate the luncheon for all teachers and staff.

Monetary and/or food donations may be requested, but not required from the grade level's parents. The PTA will contribute \$200 to each luncheon and the GLC will be responsible for managing the luncheon budget and submitting reimbursements to the PTA. Four or five volunteers can help with set-up and clean-up and 2-4 volunteers can help serve and replenish items during the luncheon. The grade level hosting the luncheon may also recruit volunteers for cafeteria duty during their grade level's lunch time so all the teachers in that grade level may enjoy lunch together in the Teacher's Lounge.

Teacher Appreciation Week: Room Parents may wish to notify their students and families about National Teacher Appreciation Week. Room Parents have the option (this is not mandatory) to provide teachers with small gifts each day of the week on behalf of the class if their budget allows. These gifts are not to exceed \$20 for the full week. Items (not gift cards) purchased for Teacher Appreciation Week may be submitted for reimbursement from your PTA classroom fund.

Instead of purchasing gifts, Room Parents may wish to encourage their students and families to send homemade cards, emails, and tweets. They may also send flowers, teacher "favorites" (chocolate, coffee, etc.). These items will not affect the classroom budget but will provide the teacher with heart-felt thanks from the students and their families.

### **D. Volunteer Recruitment**

Cookie Party: In December the PTA will host a cookie party where the entire Homestead Staff gets to take home cookies to enjoy. Room Parents will use their Volunteer Form (sent home at the beginning of the year) to identify parents who are willing to make cookies. Once volunteers are identified, the Room Parent simply needs to send a reminder email to those volunteers two weeks before the event and again a couple of days before the event. You may recruit additional volunteers if needed.

Field Day: Room Parents may be asked to send a simple email requesting volunteers to help on Field Day.

### **E. Miscellaneous Events**

Your teacher may call upon Room Parents and class parents to help with other activities or events held during the year.

## **Reimbursements from PTA Funds**

- Each class is designated \$75.00 from the PTA for parties and/or the classroom basket (not teacher gifts). Sales tax is not reimbursable; a letter for Sales Tax exemption is available on the website. A copy of the letter and a reimbursement form is available on the PTA Website. Room parents should submit their receipts for reimbursement by the PTA.
- The PTA will contribute \$200 to each luncheon and the GLC will be responsible for managing the luncheon budget and submitting reimbursements to the PTA.
- Room Parents have the option (this is not mandatory) to provide teachers with small gifts each day of Teacher Appreciation Week (in May) on behalf of the class if funds are still available in the PTA Classroom Budget. These gifts are not to exceed \$20 for the full week.

EXPENSES	FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM:		
	PTA Classroom Budget (\$75)	\$200 Grade-Level Teacher Luncheon Budget	Parent Donations* (recommend \$20/student)
Party Supplies	✓		
Auction Basket	✓		✓
Luncheon		✓	
Teacher Gifts (TOTAL OF \$150)			✓
Teacher Appreciation Gifts (up to \$20)	✓		✓

All other expenses/purchases such as Teacher Gifts must be paid from the Parent Donations collected at the beginning of the year. Items for the classroom basket and Teacher Appreciation Gifts may also be purchased with Parent Donations. Gift cards may be purchased ONLY from Parent Donations.



# 2015-16 Room Parent Check List

- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with Teacher to discuss your responsibilities (Sept.)
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send home an introductory letter & form w/ envelope attached (Sept.)
  - Type an introductory letter to parents to be distributed in Tuesday folder with the info sheet that they will send back, staple an envelope to your letter, put a label on the envelope that says to RETURN to YOUR NAME – Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_'s Room Parent
  - Organize returned info forms, Record parent donations, Provide receipts to parents, Note class allergies
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Birthday
  - Ask teacher how she would like to celebrate her birthday 2-3 weeks before her birthday
  - Send letter in Tuesday folder and/or email parents explaining what you plan to do for her/his celebration at least 2 weeks prior to your teacher's birthday.
  - Bring gift (up to \$50 from parent donations) from class, birthday treats, etc. on the day assigned
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Appreciation Luncheon
  - Meet with Grade Level Coordinator and other grade level Room Parents 3-4 weeks before luncheon
  - Determine theme, table decorations, food, drinks, game plan for the luncheon
  - Contact parents with a letter in the Tuesday folder asking for drink, dessert, side dish, etc. donations at least 3 weeks before the event
  - Contact parents again if necessary (additional letters and/or emails may need to be sent out.)
  - Purchase supplies as needed, set up, serve, clean up
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cookie Exchange (Dec.)
  - Contact parents who signed up to send in bags of cookies labeled with type of cookie (6 Bags of Cookies with 4 Cookies per Bag) two weeks before the event and again two days before the event. Recruit additional volunteers if needed.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Winter Holiday Party (Dec.)
  - Email or meet with teacher to determine any party preferences or parameters
  - Meet with Grade Level Coordinator and other grade level Room Parents to plan party; snack, craft, game, activity
  - Work with volunteers, as needed, to prepare for party, gather supplies, etc., Buy teacher gift (up to \$50 from parent donations) from class
  - Send letter in Tuesday folder and/or email parents explaining what you plan to do for the party & asking for donations and/or help at least 2 weeks prior to the event
  - Show up early to set up party, lead party, stay to clean up party

\_\_\_\_\_ Silent Auction (Jan/Feb)

- Determine class basket theme and contents; purchase items for basket (gift cards from parent donations only; other items can be reimbursed by your PTA classroom fund as funds are available)
- Send letter in the Tuesday folder and/or email to parents telling them the class basket theme and requesting additional donations (if needed) 3-4 weeks before the auction, send reminder/auction basket update letters & emails
- Put together donation basket, type up the list of items as a “tag” for the basket

\_\_\_\_\_ Valentine Party (Feb.)

- Email or meet with teacher to verify party date and time and to determine any party preferences or parameters
- Meet with Grade Level Coordinator and other grade level Room Parents to plan party; snack, craft, game, activity
- Work with volunteers, as needed, to prepare for party, gather supplies, etc.
- Send letter in Tuesday folder and/or email parents explaining what you plan to do for the party & asking for donations and/or help at least 2 weeks prior to the event
- Show up early to set up party, lead party, stay to clean up party
- Teacher gift is not required for the Valentine’s party

\_\_\_\_\_ Field day (typically in May)

- Help recruit volunteers if needed

\_\_\_\_\_ Summer Splash Day (June)

- Email or meet with teacher to verify rotation schedule for inflatables and snow cones, and to designate a time for presenting the end-of-year gift to the teacher
- Recruit 2-3 parent volunteers to help serve snow cones
- Recruit 4-6 parent volunteers for manning water inflatables for safety
- Send letter in Tuesday folder and/or email parents notifying them of rotation schedule and special instructions (wear suit underneath clothes, send a towel, apply sunscreen before sending to school, etc.) at least 2 weeks prior to the event
- Show up early to help students; stay to clean up after snow cones, etc.

Suggested Party Checklist

- Paper goods: plates napkins, cups, plastic ware
- Treats: All edibles must be pre-packaged either individually or many to a pack. Please limit the amount of sweets served.
  - Be aware of allergies that student’s may have. For party guidelines, please review this web site: [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org).
  - Be sure you have necessary supplies for classroom events. The cafeteria, art teachers, etc. do not have extra supplies for the individual classrooms.
- Drinks: Clear soda, clear juice or water are good choices. Do not provide anything that will stain.
- Games/Craft ideas: Pinterest, Oriental Trading Co. and US Toys are good sources.
- Find a parent volunteer to act as a “class photographer” to document class events.