

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ROOM PARENTS

Thank you for volunteering of your time and talents to serve as a Room Parent this year!

Important Dates: Harvest Party & Fun Run: _____

Winter Party: _____

Valentine's Party & Service Project: _____

EPES PTO Festival: _____

Year End Picnic: _____

Room Parent Coordinator: _____

School Secretary: _____

School Principal: _____

I. CLEARANCES

We value the safety and security of our students. With this in mind, **all 4 clearances/forms need to be complete and on file at the District Office in order to volunteer during the school day at East Petersburg Elementary School.**

- A. Volunteers must obtain the PA State Criminal History Check (Act 34), the Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151), and the FBI Criminal Background Check (finger printing – Act 114). Volunteers also must complete the PDE-6004 Form (Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Form).
- B. All clearances must be completed online. After receiving the receipt of payment, for the FBI Criminal Check (Act 114), you will need to be finger printed. This can be done without an appointment at the UPS store on Centerville Road or the UPS store at Stone Mill Plaza. The PDE-6004 can be accessed via the Hempfield School District website.
- C. Current clearances are ones that you obtained within one year (12 months) of the date you will be volunteering in the school.
- D. Clearances are now valid for 5 years from the date on the clearance, so clearances must be dated within the past five years when turned in for volunteering.
- E. For more information about clearances, please reference the clearance document available in the office or the district website.

II. WHAT DOES A ROOM PARENT DO?

- A. A Room Parent's #1 job is to involve as many parents as possible in classroom parties and/or school activities (such as Family Fun Nights). A tracking sheet would be helpful to ensure all parents who are interested in helping get contacted equally. Sign-Up Genius is a free online sign up website and is a very helpful tool to help with this (www.signupgenius.com).
- B. Some ways in which parents may be involved include: helping to plan classroom parties, donating to parties and classroom events, putting together the classroom directory,

communicating to parents about other PTO events or fundraisers and volunteering at classroom and school events.

- C. Delegate accordingly - don't over delegate and have too many people trying to do one task. Likewise, don't under delegate and feel like you are doing it all.
- D. All students enjoy these special events. To keep the parties and events age and developmentally appropriate, we've found Grades K-3 enjoy a variety of structured activities, where Grades 4-6 enjoy a more relaxed social atmosphere. Teachers can help gauge student interests for parties. Keep this in mind when planning.
- E. During Sneak-a-Peek and Back to School Night, the teachers will have a Room Parent Sign-Up form for you to fill out if you are interested in becoming a Room Parent. If more than 3 parents sign up, the teacher will pick the Room Parents and notify the Room Parent Coordinator.
- F. Please notify the Room Parent Coordinator ASAP if you are not able to continue as the Room Parent so we can arrange for someone to take over your responsibilities.

III. ROOM PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Planning the party with your teacher.

- 1) **The first thing you need to do as a Room Parent is contact your Teacher and arrange a time to meet and discuss holiday parties and other classroom activities.** Email is a great way to keep all facts in one place for all to see. (Please keep in mind that party times may vary with each grade level due to their "Specials".)
 - a. Some questions to ask your Teacher include: How many parent helpers are allowed per party? Are siblings allowed to attend? (More on this under "IV".) Any other guidelines they might have for parties or classroom events? **It is also very important to ask if there are any food allergies? (See more information below about allergies.)**
- 2) **Talk With Your Teacher About Any Allergies in the Classroom.** As per district policy, we ask that all snacks be **one sweet, one salty, and one healthy; water and/or 100% fruit juice.** Because of privacy laws, the school cannot tell you the name of the child with the allergy or the type of allergy. This information can only come from the parents. A parent may choose to inform you about their child's allergy, but it is also their choice not to disclose this information. Regardless, the school will provide information to support all students during this special event. If specific guidelines are provided, it is essential for the safety of our students, that all volunteers strictly adhere to the information shared.
 - a. **All snacks must be individually wrapped in the manufacturer's packaging.**
 - b. Please provide your teacher with the **food nutrition labels** so they can check their list of students for allergies. The teacher will contact those parents that have a food allergy and share the nutrition labels with them. Next, your teacher will give you the all clear, if there are no allergies. If there is an allergy, the teacher will give you suggestions from the parent of the student with the

allergy or will let you know that that parent will provide their child's own snack. Communication is key!!!!

- c. There may be times throughout the year when the PTO will provide snacks for a party. It is still very important to let the teachers know what snacks will be provided so they can communicate it to the parents. **The parents can choose to send in another snack for their child if there is a concern.** The PTO will not be able to provide substitutions on an individual basis since the snacks are either bought in bulk or donated.

B. Planning the Party: Party Events, Ideas, and Tips.

- 1) Several weeks before the party, have a planning meeting with your volunteers to discuss the snacks, what games, craft and/or activities you will be doing for your class. Your teacher will be a great resource to help you with curriculum-based activities or themes that are being discussed and learned in the classroom at the time of your party.
 - a. Write up an outline of your party plan and submit the plan and nutrition labels of all snacks to your teacher for approval **before** communicating with parents for donations or participation at the party. **After the teacher has given you approval,** then you can send out the electronic sign up through Sign-Up Genius for items to be donated and parent volunteers to sign up.
 - b. Communicate with the classroom teacher if you need to reserve a Common Area, need extra trash barrels or tables.
 - c. Re-check the total number of students in the classroom **before each event** because this does change throughout the year.
- 2) Children are usually just coming in from recess, and need a little transition time. Some ideas could be to have them decorate bags, which they will use to take projects home or have "activity packs" (themed word searches, puzzles, etc) on their desks to work on until ready to start the party.
- 3) In general, it is best to start a party with the craft so it has time to dry and it is a quiet activity. **ALWAYS LABEL CRAFTS WITH CHILD'S NAME.**
 - a. Ziploc baggies are great for taking crafts home.
 - b. Oriental Trading Company is a good place to order crafts and most of them come presorted (but please be aware their pieces/parts are often very small and difficult for younger children to manipulate)
 - c. Always have a completed sample of the craft to show the students.
 - d. Check out the craft kits at Michaels, ACMoore or Jo-Ann Fabrics and watch for the 40% off coupons in the Sunday and Wednesday paper. Or use your Kid Stuff Coupons 😊
- 4) Games are a great second event – one lively game followed by a quiet game or a story book for the younger grades.
 - a. While the quiet game or story is going on, parent volunteers can be setting up the snack. Generally the younger children have their snacks at their desks, while the older children seem to like a "buffet" line.
 - b. If your activities need small groups, ask the teacher to put the children into groups. The teachers know best which students work well together.

- 5) Always have extra activities planned. You may not use them, but they come in handy if a craft/game/story doesn't work out as planned or the party goes so quickly there is time left over.
- 6) Check with the teachers to see if the upper grades (4th-6th) would want to work together for whole grade level parties or have individual class parties. Intermediate students enjoy the extra social time and therefore do not find organized activities as entertaining. Be sure to plan age and developmentally appropriate things for the parties. K-3rd grade parties seem to work best by individual class.
- 7) Party Station Tips:
 - a. Arranging the party with stations can be helpful as children work well in smaller groups.
 - b. Arranging the party with stations is useful for more intricate crafts or for more than one craft.
 - c. However, keep in mind that younger children may find it difficult or confusing to move from station to station.
 - d. Stations take more time because it takes time for children to move around the classroom.
 - e. Stations can be distracting if a game is being played in another station.
- 8) Use the list of parents from the directory forms that want to help plan, donate, and participate in parties. Set up Sign-Up Genius to communicate with parents (www.signupgenius.com). **** Remember to add the Room Parent Coordinator's email to your Sign-Up Genius group. This is simply a layer of support.**** Remember to set up an automatic reminder email to go out to parents anywhere from 1 week to 2 days prior to party.

C. One Week Before the Party

- 1) Communicate the approved volunteer list with the Office Secretaries and Principal by sending an email no less than 72 hours in advance of the party to confirm that the Volunteers are cleared to help.
- 2) If you do not have enough volunteers signed up to help at the party, please talk to your teacher about sending a letter home with the students, asking for more help. Or if you do not have enough people donating food items, check with an Executive Member of the PTO for options.

D. Party Day

- 1) Most teachers will allow parent volunteers to come in 15 minutes early to set up. Please check in advance. All parties are approximately one hour. On the day of the event, please clearly label items with the teacher's name and grade level.
- 2) Parent Volunteers must check in at the office to receive your visitor's badge. Be prepared to show your driver's license. **Remember all 4 clearances/forms must be completed and on file in the District Office in order to volunteer during the school day in the school building.**
- 3) If you follow your party plan, you will already have assignments ready for your parent volunteers. A brief, written or verbal instruction is helpful the day of the party.
- 4) If the party ends at 3:15 pm, your child is allowed to leave with you. Please exit through the front lobby or office and sign them out.

- 5) **HAVE FUN** --- You did all the planning and you are ready!! The wild, weird and wacky things that happen (and they will) are the great stories of tomorrow!

E. Year End Picnics (Grades K-6)

Check with your teacher for dates and times and if the class will be having the picnic with another class. If they are, please communicate with the other Room Parents and work together. Things to take: water, hand sanitizer, trash bags, cell phone and small First Aid Kit.

F. Communicate Volunteer Opportunities for PTO Events. For example, forward sign-ups for events or activities in which parents may want to be involved or donate items.

G. Handle PTO Classroom Money. You can submit receipts following each party and can be reimbursed for a maximum of \$1/per student per party. You can submit receipts and may be reimbursed for a maximum of \$2/per student to cover expenses for the classroom picnic at the end of the year. Receipts must be turned in within 30 days from date of the party. Please attach the completed reimbursement form located in the PTO Forms Mailbox and place in the PTO bin in the Main Office. The secretaries can help you with this if you have questions.

IV. SIBLINGS

If siblings are attending with a parent who has signed up to help, they must behave appropriately and not become a distraction. Parents should bring their own snacks or items to entertain and occupy the sibling during the classroom parties.

A. Check with your Teacher during your meeting at the beginning of the school year about whether or not siblings are allowed to attend classroom parties.

B. If Siblings are not allowed to attend, please mention this when you send out your request for parent helpers for your parties. You could say something like, "So that you can enjoy special time with your second grader, please arrange childcare for all siblings."

C. If your Teacher allows siblings to attend, please consider the following:

- 1) Always keep in mind that classroom parties are for East Pete Elementary students. Students must always be the priority and plans should not be altered in any way simply to accommodate siblings.
- 2) Parents must supervise the siblings!
- 3) At your first Party Planning Meeting, discuss with parent volunteers whether or not to include siblings who attend classroom parties in the activities. If the consensus is to include siblings, you can get a count of how many siblings will attend when you request parent volunteers for the party. If additional crafts are needed for siblings, someone must donate those items (sibling items cannot be reimbursed through PTO money). However, if you have a few leftover crafts, snacks, etc it is ok to share these with siblings. For example, when craft items must be purchased in dozens for a class of 21 students there would be 3 leftover that could be shared with siblings. Because PTO funds are contributed by families, we think this is acceptable.

V. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Parking: Please remind parents NOT to park in the bus lanes – they may park in the parent/guest parking lot, facing the school to the right.

- B. Classroom donations/gifts:** PTO monies may not be spent on donations/gifts for the classroom. You may informally ask for a VOLUNTARY contribution toward a classroom-wide donation, as long as every student, regardless of contribution, is credited and benefits from its use. Donations for the classroom are always appreciated. Examples include: playground balls, games for indoor recess, school supplies, tissues, and hand sanitizer.
- C. Cell phones:** Please ask all volunteers to silence cell phones while in the classroom. If there is a need to use a cell phone, please do so outside of the school building.
- D. Contact numbers:** Remind your parent helpers to keep their phone numbers and email addresses up-to-date so it is easier for you to contact them with party/PTO event information.
- E. Don't forget to thank your parent helpers.** A quick sentence in your next party email is fine, or you can send out a thank you email separately.
- F.** Hempfield School District is scaling back on the amount of paper used in the schools. Emails and phone calls are the preferred method when contacting families in your classroom. If there is a need to send out a mailing, check with the office to determine if you will need to use the district print shop. When using the print shop, drop your letters/forms at the office for copying. Label them with: # of copies you need, teacher's name, and school (EPES). **Note: please be sure all your paperwork is approved by your teacher before sending to the print shop.** Please allow one week turn-around time.

Remember the most important part of being a Room Parent is to get everyone involved who has signed up to participate!

If you have any questions, problems or need help in any way, please contact the Room Parent Coordinator.

We are here to help you!