

# Mendham Township Elementary School

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## Room Parent Handbook



## WELCOME!

Room Parents are an invaluable resource at Mendham Township Elementary School (MTES). In this role, you are an important enabler of many of the activities, events, and programs that make our school such a special place! Your help is greatly appreciated by the entire MTES community.

The primary role of a Room Parent is to provide support and assistance to the teacher and provide communication to the parents. Room Parents should talk with the teacher about how she/he would like to work with them and parent volunteers and what specific classroom help they will require throughout the year. Using that information, the Room Parents can develop a plan for the year that directly addresses the teacher's unique needs and preferences.

Room Parents are also viewed as a key conduit of information from the Home and School Association (H.S.A.) to all parents. Room Parents must be a member of the H.S.A. If you are currently not a member, please visit our the H.S.A. website and sign up.

Also, Room Parents are strongly encouraged to attend H.S.A. meetings. It is important that at least one Room Parent from your class attend each H.S.A. meeting so that they may pass on the important information from the meeting to the rest of their class.

Being a Room Parent is a wonderful way to interact with other parents while staying informed on MTSD (Mendham Township School District) and H.S.A. issues and activities. You will have the opportunity to hear updates from the superintendent (Dr. Sal Constantino), the school principals (Dr. Ciccone and Ms. Kotcho), various other school administrators, as well as the H.S.A. Board and Committee Chairs. The meetings take place in the MTES Staff Development Room. Refreshments are served at 9:15 am with the meeting beginning promptly at 9:30 am. The meetings occur about three times a school year and will be posted online as well as communicated in the weekly eblasts.

## Room Parents Responsibilities

1. Provide support to your classroom teacher according to her/his requests by helping to ensure clear, timely communication between the teacher and parents regarding activities, events, and needs in the classroom. Your teacher should be copied on all your communications to the class except for communication regarding teacher appreciation activities and gifts.
2. Assist in creating a fair environment where all willing parents are given equal opportunities to participate. Coordinate requested items for classroom activities. Please use Signup Genius to ask for requested items. Signup Genius lets you request the quantity of the items needed and it sends reminder emails to volunteers usually 2 days ahead of the event. With respect to requesting volunteers, please have parents email you directly. You must follow the volunteer protocol in selecting names and ensure parents understand this policy. (See No. 3 below)
3. Coordinate volunteers and chaperones. When requesting volunteers for a classroom activity or to chaperone a field trip, please do so in the following way so it is fair and consistent throughout the year. This policy gives each parent who may want to volunteer a chance:
  - a When asking for volunteers, send out an email that you need a volunteer for a certain event, specifying the date and time of the event and how many volunteers you will need. Please do this 2-3 weeks prior to the event.
  - b Tell your parents that they have a week to respond to you if they would like to volunteer. Give a specific deadline date to submit their name. It is recommended that before the deadline arrives, that you send a gentle reminder to parents advising of the upcoming deadline.
  - c After the deadline has been reached, randomly select the number of volunteers you need from the names you have received. Using email, advise the class of the parents you have selected.
  - d Keep the list of volunteers readily available in the event a selected volunteer cancels at the last minute and you need an alternate.

In all communication to the class regarding volunteers, please remind parents of the volunteer policy and that no person will get a second chance to help out before all parents have had an opportunity to volunteer. Keep track of your volunteers to maintain this policy.

4. Plan and manage all teacher appreciation activities and classroom gifts throughout the year. (e.g. holiday gift, Teacher Appreciation Week, and end-of-year gift). Please remember that all contributions are completely optional and this should be communicated to the class. See gift policy attached.
5. Communicate and reference New Food Policy standards within the classroom. After meeting with your teacher, you will review the events throughout the year and learn how best your teacher would like to handle food items in the classroom. He/She may specifically select items from the New Food list or may ask you to do so for upcoming events. At your initial meeting, it is important to inquire whether there are any additional food allergies or intolerances that may further affect current items on the New Food Policy. If so, make appropriate changes for the school year when planning events and communicating with parents.
6. Communicate all H.S.A. information to your class as directed by the H.S.A. within a timely manner.

## **GETTING STARTED**

1. ***Attend Room Parent Meeting at the Beginning of the School Year.*** This meeting will be held within the first few weeks of school at MTES.
2. ***Meet Your Co-Room Parent.*** Determine with your fellow Room Parent how you will work together to share responsibilities. Some teachers might like to be informed about what you have determined so that there is no confusion about who will be doing what tasks (e.g. month-by-month, request-by-request). This is a great time to discuss your communication styles and how best to work together. Reach out to your classroom teacher and set your initial meeting.
3. ***Meet Your Teacher.*** Email your teacher and introduce yourselves and find out how she/he would like to discuss her/his needs for the year. Most teachers will want to meet in person and we encourage such a meeting due to the amount of information to review. In the event you cannot meet, we recommend a telephone conference following up with email confirmation of your meeting.
4. ***Meet Your Class.*** Ask your teacher for the emails of parents in your class. Create a group email list for the class where the class becomes the “bcc” and

you are both the recipient and the sender. (This ensures privacy of all emails since some parents do not want their email published. It also eliminates the large header that is created in emails.) Email parents to introduce yourselves as Room Parents, include relevant information regarding upcoming H.S.A. events/dates and programs and any relevant information you have obtained from your teacher regarding the year ahead. This is a good time to remind parents of the volunteer policy if you have a field trip or event early in the school year. Let parents know that throughout the year you will be using Signup Genius for any items needed but that you will be sending separate emails to ask for volunteers and chaperones. (A sample email letter is attached for your review).

Finally, thank you! We could not manage our classrooms and provide the wonderful support we do without a team of dedicated and hardworking volunteers like you! Please do not hesitate to reach out to your H.S.A. vice-presidents or presidents listed below for any assistance or support throughout the year.

**MTES VICE-PRESIDENTS**

Jane Leonard, [janeleonard525@gmail.com](mailto:janeleonard525@gmail.com)

Anne Bergeron, [abergeron15@gmail.com](mailto:abergeron15@gmail.com)

**MT H.S.A. PRESIDENTS**

Meredith Ogden, [meredith1423@gmail.com](mailto:meredith1423@gmail.com)

Peggy Colucci, [ptcolucci@gmail.com](mailto:ptcolucci@gmail.com)

## **Sample: Room Parent Welcome Letter to Class Parents**

Welcome to the new school year and to the **[TEACHER'S NAME]** Class!

I'm **NAME**, one of your Room Parents along with **NAME**, and we are looking forward to working with you this year so **TEACHER'S NAME** and our kids have the best possible year. During the school year, there will be opportunities to volunteer with class activities and/or field trips. As Room Parents, we will work hard to give everyone an opportunity to volunteer whenever and however possible. We are excited to get started and are happy to answer any questions that you may have as it relates to our class activities or the H.S.A.

### **Here are some important details and dates:**

- > Teacher name and contact information
- > Your names and contact information
- > Schedule of upcoming class parties, events and field trips (if you have them)

Thank you! Together, we're going to have a great year!

## **MTES COLLECTION GIFT POLICY**

- 1. Set a collection date window with a clear deadline of when you will be accepting contributions. For example, “please send in your contribution via Venmo at \_\_\_\_\_ or with your child in an envelope addressed to \_\_\_\_\_ beginning immediately until \_\_\_\_\_ (insert deadline date).” Send gentle reminders of your upcoming deadline since these are usually very busy times of the year.**
- 2. Advise parents which Room Parent will be accepting the donations. We recommend you designate one person to avoid any confusion.**
- 3. Let parents know when you will present the gift(s) to the teacher. It is customary that holiday gifts are done at the Class Holiday Party and End-of-the Year gifts are done at the Year-end party. It is also nice to send an email to all parents to let them know what you purchased for the teacher. It is common to do a small gift with a gift card but you can do whatever you think is best.**
- 4. When asking parents to contribute for a gift, you may NOT request a specific dollar amount. Please remind parents that all donations are optional. It also nice to give the option to parents to have their child make a gift such as a picture, craft or write a sweet note.**
- 5. Any cards given to the teacher should be signed by the entire class such as “Your 2019-2020 Class”.**
- 6. Remember not to copy your teacher on any emails to the parents. We only mention this because I know many Room Parents have pre-created email lists in which the teachers are copied on all communications with the class.**