

# **DISCOVERY ELEMENTARY**

## **ROOM PARENT COORDINATOR HANDBOOK**

**2008-2009**

Thank you for joining Discovery Elementary active and involved parent volunteer group. Your job is an important one. As the interface between parents and your teacher, you make it easy for teachers to focus on teaching and parents to focus on contributing. Together we create the learning experiences and memories we all want our children to have in school.

This handbook introduces you to your job description and to my job in supporting you. It captures ideas others have used to carry out the various facets of the parent coordinator job in past years. I know that at the end of the year this handbook will be even more valuable to those who follow, because it will include your great ideas and suggestions for improvement.

**DISCOVERY ELEMENTARY  
ROOM PARENT COORDINATOR JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

**Room Parent Coordinator**

1. Act as the main liaison between the teacher and classroom parent volunteers. Your teacher, then, has one parent to work and deal with on a day-to-day basis for scheduling and minor problems that may arise, rather than all parent volunteers. **Contact your teacher to discuss your role in her/his classroom.**
2. Forward all email from the PTA Liaison to the parents in your class:
  - Please collect email addresses from your parents at the beginning of the year. **The PTA relies on Room Parents as a means of getting email to all families.**
3. Coordinate with the teacher to plan parent jobs in the classroom.
  - Find parents to perform the jobs.
  - Prepare monthly classroom volunteer schedules.
4. Find people to perform the many odd jobs that arise during the year.
5. Welcome new families into the program during the year.
  - Make yourself available to answer questions.
  - Determine if they want to volunteer in classroom and schedule them accordingly.
6. Use your Room Parent Chairperson as a resource if needed.
- 7. Ensure all parents sign and return “Confidentiality Agreement” (attached).**
8. Ensure all parents are up-to-date on WA State Patrol form: coordinate with the front office to check the list.

## GETTING STARTED

### Planning with your teacher for classroom jobs

Teachers will start the year with an idea of how they want to use volunteers in their classrooms. Your first job is to find out how your teacher wishes to be supported by parents and by you.

1. Together develop and finalize the list of classroom jobs.
2. Determine procedure to follow when classroom volunteer is unable to work (child sick, meeting at work, etc.).
3. Distribute Volunteer Orientation letter to parents who will be volunteering in any way throughout the school year.

### Organizing Volunteer Jobs:

1. Determine if all jobs have been filled. If not, find volunteers to fill open positions.
2. Prepare list of all jobs and volunteer assignments and distribute to teacher and all parents for verification.
3. **Return required list to Room Parent Coordinator by the required date.**
4. Prepare monthly schedule:
  - Parent volunteers are usually scheduled in blocks of time, depending on teacher's preference.
  - Docents usually schedule independently with the teachers.
  - If possible, list several on-call substitute names on your schedule handouts, so people can get their own substitutes when required.
1. Make class list, at teacher's request.

### Special Project Collection:

Some teachers collect money at the beginning of the year for special projects and various parties to be held throughout the school year. Please talk with your teacher about her/his ideas on this.

- It is less time-consuming to only collect money once and the parents will not feel they are being nicked & dimed throughout the year.
- The downside to this: there is potential of running out of money before the end of the year, so spend wisely ☺.

### Thank You Notes:

It is a nice idea to send parents a thank you note after volunteering...this can be done after field trips, parties, or in June for those parents who worked in the class throughout the year.

Have fun!!

## **VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS**

- Keep your commitments. When you cannot show up, find a substitute. Avoid setting up your teacher to have to re-plan major portions of the day.
- Be flexible about what you are willing to do.
- Follow attached Volunteer Orientation Guidelines for classroom etiquette, working with students in large group settings, discipline, working with small groups, confidentiality, and downtime.
- Maintain confidentiality.

## **MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION**

### Signing in

- Sign in and out in the office on arriving.
- Get and wear a Volunteer badge out of the hanging holder next to the office. Remember to return it before leaving school.
- IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU SIGN OUT WHEN YOU ARE READY WALK OUT OF THE BUILDING. This is particularly important in the event the school is having a fire drill or an actual emergency. The fire department checks the volunteer sign in sheet and the front office staff must account for everyone on there who has not signed out.
- Thank you for attention to this important detail.

### Using the copy machine

- Each teacher has a 3-digit copy machine number. Use this number when making copies of class lists, monthly calendars, etc.
- Please ask the secretaries if you need help with the copy machines and remember to clean up after yourself. Return any unused items to their proper home.
- Teachers have 1<sup>st</sup> priority with the copy machine, as they have limited time to sneak in copies...please be respectful of their needs.

### Finding/Using supplies

- Most supplies will be provided by the teacher.
- Rolls of colored butcher paper are at various locations in the halls.
- Clean up after yourself.

### Distribution policy

- Papers for class-wide distribution (calendars, class lists, newsletters) are to be approved by the teacher before distribution.

### Sibling policy

- Please obtain teacher approval to bring siblings to class parties.
- Siblings are not allowed on field trips, in the workroom, in the classroom, or class parties while the parent is scheduled to work.

Encourage "kid trading" with other moms, to allow those with small kids to volunteer on a regular basis.



## **VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION**

Thanks so much for your willingness to join our class and help out. Any assistance you can give will be greatly appreciated! Below are a few thoughts I hope are helpful to you when you are in class.

### **CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

- Watch the teacher and “model” his/her strategies.
- We are in the classroom to benefit the students, so adult visiting is not appropriate. Children will model YOUR behavior, so demonstrate active listening and attention to work at hand.
- If you need a moment with the teacher about your own child, please leave a note. It is not an appropriate time to “conference”.
- THE PARENT –vs.- THE CLASSROOM HELPER CHALLENGE: When you come to class, try to leave “the parent” behind. Feel free to observe your own child, but exercise restraint. Only say to your child what you might say to any other child. Only be as hard on your child as you would any other. Let your child grow as an individual, encouraged by your dedication to the importance of education. Try not to hover!

### **WORKING WITH STUDENTS IN LARGE GROUP SETTINGS**

- Listen to the teacher’s directions so you are clear as to the task at hand and can better help the students.
- Begin by stating what was done well. Be specific—“I see good listeners”, “I see people working on task”, etc.
- Show acceptance of the student’s feelings. When a child is negative or complains, acknowledge the feeling with a specific word; for example, “that sounds discouraging... frustrating...”

- Redirect
  - Do not accept “I don’t get it”. Find out what is not understood.
  - As appropriate, go over the directions again one item at a time. See what the student does understand. See if the student can predict what would make sense and be correct.
  - Find different ways to explain the task. Often times, having another student explain the task may be helpful.
  - Try not to give answers.
  - Give genuine praise.
  - Circulate and watch the students. One may not tell you when one needs help. Help to re-focus when necessary.

## **DISCIPLINE**

- Observe how your teacher handles discipline. Look over the teacher’s discipline policy and ask about specifics.
- Let the teacher handle major problems.
- Positively reinforce students.
- Standing near a student, or lightly tapping a student on the shoulder, often helps a student refocus.
- Quietly redirect as needed; try not to embarrass.
- Get at eye level when speaking to a student.
- Humor works well, if it does not ridicule.
- Questioning often redirects a child; for example, “Where might I find....?”, “What are you working on?”

## **WORKING WITH SMALL GROUPS**

- Ask for a specific behavior. “I need to see your eyes/hands still/books closed.” Then wait to get it. This takes patience but will certainly pay off. Do not proceed until you have everyone’s attention.
- When you give a direction, ask for a response in some way. Don’t go ahead without understanding; for example, “Give me a thumbs up if you know...”
- Do not accept rude behavior. Without lecturing, you can identify a behavior as rude. If necessary, ask a child to leave the group. Children need to know their limits.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

We all have a right to respect and privacy. Students have those rights in respects to their behavior and academic performance.

- If you need to discuss a difficulty with a certain student, it should never be done within “earshot” of other students. Too often we do so and forget children are intelligent and sensitive people. Children will repeat what they hear and the results can be cruel.
- If you need to discuss student performance, please speak to the teacher. Please do not discuss children after you have left the classroom.
- Teacher may need to share information with you in order to make your job easier. Please “forget” the information when you leave.

## **DOWNTIME**

If the teacher has not given specific instructions, is busy, or your usual “job” is finished, here are suggestions for filling your time:

- Straighten up sink area, papers in cubbies, centers around the room.
- Model correct behaviors. Help students.
- Observe and get ideas.
- Check the To-Do list on the parent/project table/notebook.

## POTENTIAL PARENT VOLUNTEER JOBS

**Art Docent**--Bring fine art into the classroom, using provided reproductions of visual art. Lead discussions that help children learn to view art critically. May also teach hands-on art projects to illustrate a technique or concept. Art background not required.

**Book Order Coordinator**—Take orders, count money, prepare the orders, send them off, then organize materials when received for distribution to the students. An ideal job for a working parent.

**Bulletin Board Creator**--Design, create, and put up bulletin boards in classroom and hallway, utilizing children's work when possible. Teacher will provide schedule of themes so bulletin boards are related to lessons.

**Classroom Helper**--Assist in the classroom on a weekly or biweekly basis. The teacher will determine what activities you will do, which could include any of the following:

- assist the students with class work
- work with a small group of students on reading, writing, drama, math etc. or some special project
- grade student papers
- put up/take down bulletin boards
- assist teacher with preparation of classroom lesson materials
- run photocopies

**Computer Docent**--Assist teacher in classroom or computer lab with computer curriculum for your grade level. Computer experience helpful, but not required.

**Eager Reader Coordinator**--Tally reading minutes for students in the classroom.

**Field Trip Chaperone and Coordinator**--Keep track of a small group of children during a field trip. This is a good job for someone who can occasionally take time off from work to join the class. Please note, no siblings are allowed on field trips due to district policy.

**Home Project Parent**--Help with work that can be sent home, such as project preparation, cutting, etc. Great job for working parent!

**On-Call Substitute**--Serve as a substitute for the regularly scheduled Classroom Helper.

**Party Bakers**--Make cookies or other treats for class parties. Please talk with your teacher about allergies in the class.

**Party Planner**--Organize parties the teacher wants to have. Plan the parties and call for people to send treats, drinks, napkins, plates, etc. Initiation and coordination can be through the Room Parent Coordinator or directly with the teacher.

**Phone Tree Caller**--Call parents as requested by teacher.