



CLASS PARENTS GUIDE

CLASS PARENTS
ARE COMMUNICATORS
AND ASSISTANTS
WITHIN THE CLASS



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Role of Class Parents

Class Parents serve in two main capacities: as communicators, and as assistants within the class. On the one hand, the Class Parent is the communication link between the class teacher/sponsor, parents of the class, the Volunteer Coordinator, the Parent Association, and on occasion, the school.

The other responsibility of the Class Parent is to assist the teacher/sponsor by helping to coordinate class related activities, and securing parental participation in the following activities:

- Field trips
- Plays & performances
- Social component of parent evenings
- Other class events

Top Five Reasons to Become a Class Parent

1. Meet and develop relationships with other parents
2. Model for your child your commitment to his/her education
3. Help the class teacher/sponsor to carry certain tasks, thereby freeing the teacher to focus on teaching and nurturing the students
4. Continue learning about Waldorf education
5. Contribute to the well-being and stability of the class and the entire school

Class Parent Selection

Class Parents are selected by their class teacher/sponsor. Anyone interested in being a Class Parent should let the class teacher/sponsor know. Some classes work effectively with a small “team” of Class Parents who can share the duties.

What Do I Have to Do?

- Help the class teacher/sponsor organize class events and school outings
- Help generate interest for parents to participate in class events, performances, plays and field trips
- Assist the class teacher/sponsor with preparation for parent evenings
- Attend Parent Association meetings once a month, and Class Parents meetings, generally twice each year (this is a gathering of Class Parents from all grades) – and relay any information back to the parents of your child’s class

What Skills are Desirable?

- **Ability to organize and delegate:** Class Parents need to be able to stay well informed of upcoming events and execute timely and effective organization of parent evenings, trips, and other class events.
- **Ability to communicate:** the essence of the Class Parent commitment is communication. They need to have the ability to communicate clearly and promptly to and from the parents and the teacher/sponsor. Class Parents also need to be good listeners, so other parents feel heard and their ideas and contributions valued. It is important to be friendly and relate well to all other parents so they feel comfortable in approaching you. Parents working well together create a healthy social atmosphere, supporting the children and contributing to the school community.
- Class Parents play a role in welcoming new students and their families into the class, especially at parent evenings. The new parents will be grateful for being included, especially when they are entering a class where the group has been together for a number of years.

How Much Time Does It Take?

The time commitment varies according to the level of class activities. You will be busier during preparation for a class play, and when your child's class is engaged in organizing field trips. There will be quiet times as well. Sharing the Class Parent responsibility with another parent is a great way to make this commitment more fun and less time-consuming for each of you.

Terms

The Class Parent ideally volunteers his/her time from January of one year to January of the next, and in some cases may serve for more than one school year. Class parents help the teacher to find and train a replacement at the end of their term.

What Are My Responsibilities Around Parent Evenings?

As parent evenings are scheduled by the teacher/sponsor, you need to communicate the meeting times to all parents in your class. It is important that every family receive the message and be strongly encouraged to participate. Although parent evenings are not mandatory, they form the core of the social fabric of the class, supporting a shared understanding among parents of the pedagogical direction for the year, and of the nature of the students' interactions with their teachers, and with their peers. Attendance at parent evenings is a cornerstone of the students' success and sense of support in a Waldorf School.

Refreshments are not required but are a pleasant addition to parent evenings, so you may want to organize this by arranging contributions on a rotating basis.

You will also need to arrange for notes to be taken during the parent evenings. These notes cover the topics discussed, key aspects of all points of view, any conclusions/decisions reached, any action to be taken and by whom, and within which time frame. These notes are checked for accuracy by the class teacher/sponsor and the administration before being distributed by email to all parents of the class.

Are There Fundraising Responsibilities?

School fundraising is held by the Development office. As a class parent, you may be asked to support the development office in these tasks, primarily in communication. You do not have to ask other parents for donations.

The Parent Association occasionally holds fundraisers, such as the Chinook book sale, and will request your support with these.

How Much Do I Need to Know About Waldorf Education?

You do not need to be particularly familiar with Waldorf education to be a great Class Parent. What you do need is a willingness to learn from your teachers about the particular ways in which Waldorf education approaches students and their learning, as you will be working closely with your class teacher/sponsor. You should thoroughly familiarize yourself with the Parent Handbook, and keep informed about the school's events through the school's newsletter and website. This will provide you with the knowledge base to support you in your role.

How Much Do I Need To Know About the Organization of the School and How Do I Handle Concerns?

You are not expected to answer any questions that parents have about Waldorf education or about the school. Our Family Handbook includes much information about the school, and we encourage you to refer to the handbook often. You are the listening ear that your fellow parents trust, and you guide them in bringing their concerns and questions to the Heads of School. In fact, we ask that you refrain from answering any issue brought to you by your fellow parents, so as not to burden yourself with responsibilities beyond the scope of your task. The Heads of School will handle all questions and issues in a timely and knowledgeable manner, and they will direct all questions promptly to the best resource.

Email Communication

Communication via email is the most effective and preferred method of communication for most parents. SWS requests email addresses from parents for ease of communication, and considers parents' email information as permission to communicate about school events as needed. SWS takes great care to protect the privacy of this information by using a blind carbon copy format.

When you, in your role as Class Parent, wish to send an email message to the parents in your class, we kindly request that you send your message to a central school email, emailrequest@seattlewaldorf.org, and we will forward your message. By following this protocol we accomplish several things: we ensure that the privacy of families' email information is respected, we ensure that we are sending messages to the most current addresses available for all families, and we permit the school administration to see communications pertaining to school life, thus allowing us to maintain cohesion and accuracy.

If there are parents in the class who do not use email, it is the responsibility of the Class Parent to telephone these families to relay the information. You can of course delegate this task to a trusted parent in your class.

General Suggestions

- Maintain regular contact with your class teacher/ sponsor to find out how parents can best assist with class activities.
- Most classes find they like to organize at least one social event each year, whether it is a mid-year picnic, a camping trip, a holiday potluck or winter sledding party, or an end-of-year gathering. Check with your parents and teacher to see what they would most like to do.
- It is helpful to future Class Parents if you keep a brief written record of what was done during the year – gifts, parties, issues, activities, and suggestions.
- Parents in your class may wish to give gifts to teachers in appreciation for their work, for birthdays, holidays, or at the end of the year. Faculty members truly appreciate these expressions of gratitude, and are delighted to receive thoughtful and modest gifts on these occasions. The school permits the collecting of funds for faculty gifts according to the following guidelines: contributions for faculty gifts should be worded as invitation to participate rather than requests, and clearly convey that participation is not expected. Collecting of funds for faculty gifts should be done discreetly and eliminate all pressure to participate without mention of a 'suggested', 'recommended', or 'appropriate'. The school office does not collect funds from parents for the purpose of faculty gifts. As a class parent you may be asked by the parents in your class to facilitate the gathering and delivery of gathered individual gifts.
- Understand who your fellow parents are. Some parents truly have very little time to contribute. Their limitations in that area should be respected. Specific requests work much better than open ended ones.
- It works well to be direct about the need for all parents to contribute to the social life of the class as well as the pedagogical life of the students. Parents are very keen supporters of Waldorf education, for which they often make substantial sacrifices. The support of parents should be regularly acknowledged and appreciated within your class. Talk with your group about ways to share responsibilities.